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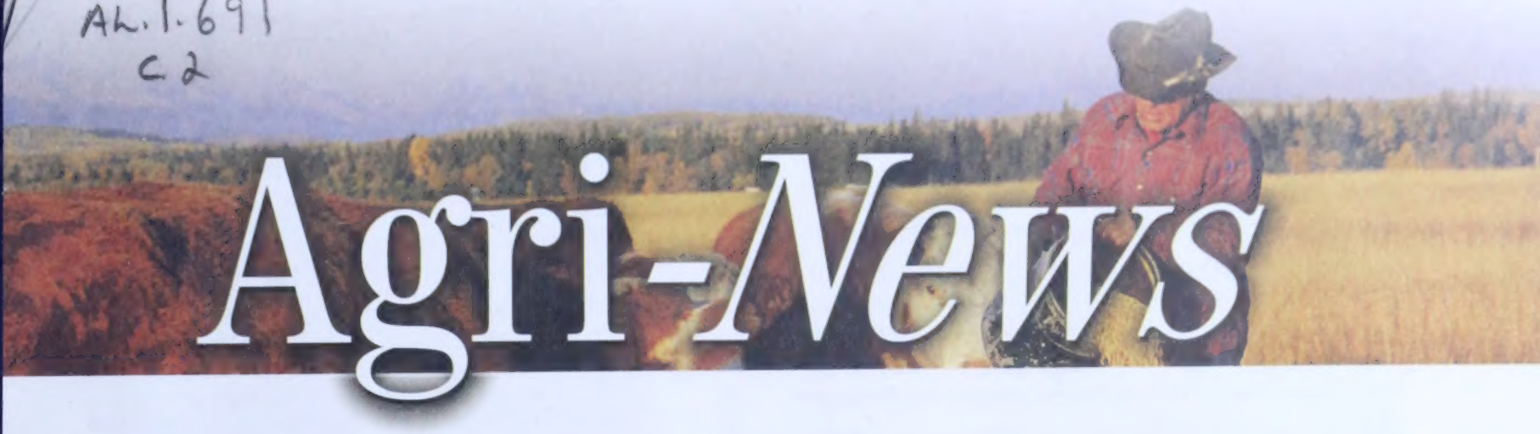

Agri-News

January 6, 2003

2003 Horse Breeders and Owners conference

The equine event of the year is being held in Red Deer January 10 to 12, 2003. The ***Horse Breeders and Owners Conference***, now in it's 23rd year, features an agenda that gives attendees a range of interesting presentations to choose from. Internationally respected speakers will present sessions on horse health, training techniques, research findings and marketing information.

"The conference has become very well known for inviting excellent speakers who present information on topics and issues that Albertans in the equine industry can benefit from. This year is no exception," says Les Burwash, horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie.

The conference also features an SPCA invited speaker as part of the ***Fred Pearce Memorial Speaker Series***. For 2003, that speaker is **Mother Hildegard George** from Shaw Island, Washington, who will be speaking on the topic Use of Animals in Therapy for Troubled Children.

"For the past three years, the Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference has been pleased to include the ***Alberta Horse Industry Distinguished Service Award*** presentation as part of the weekend proceedings," adds Burwash. "The Distinguished Service Award honours an Albertan or group of Albertans for their contribution to enhance the horse industry. This year's inductee will be honoured on Saturday evening, joining Bill Collins (first recipient 2000), Ron and Marg Southern (2001), and Hans Hansma (2002), as the newest member of this celebrated company."

The conference offers different programs designed to fit different equine interests. Conference participants can attend any of the sessions and will receive the printed materials from all sessions.

The ***Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference***, organized by the Horse Industry Section of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the Horse Industry Association of Alberta, is being held on January 10, 11 and 12, 2003, at the Capri Centre in Red Deer. The conference opens with a wine and cheese reception on Friday, January 10 at 7:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday's sessions begin at 8:40 a.m.

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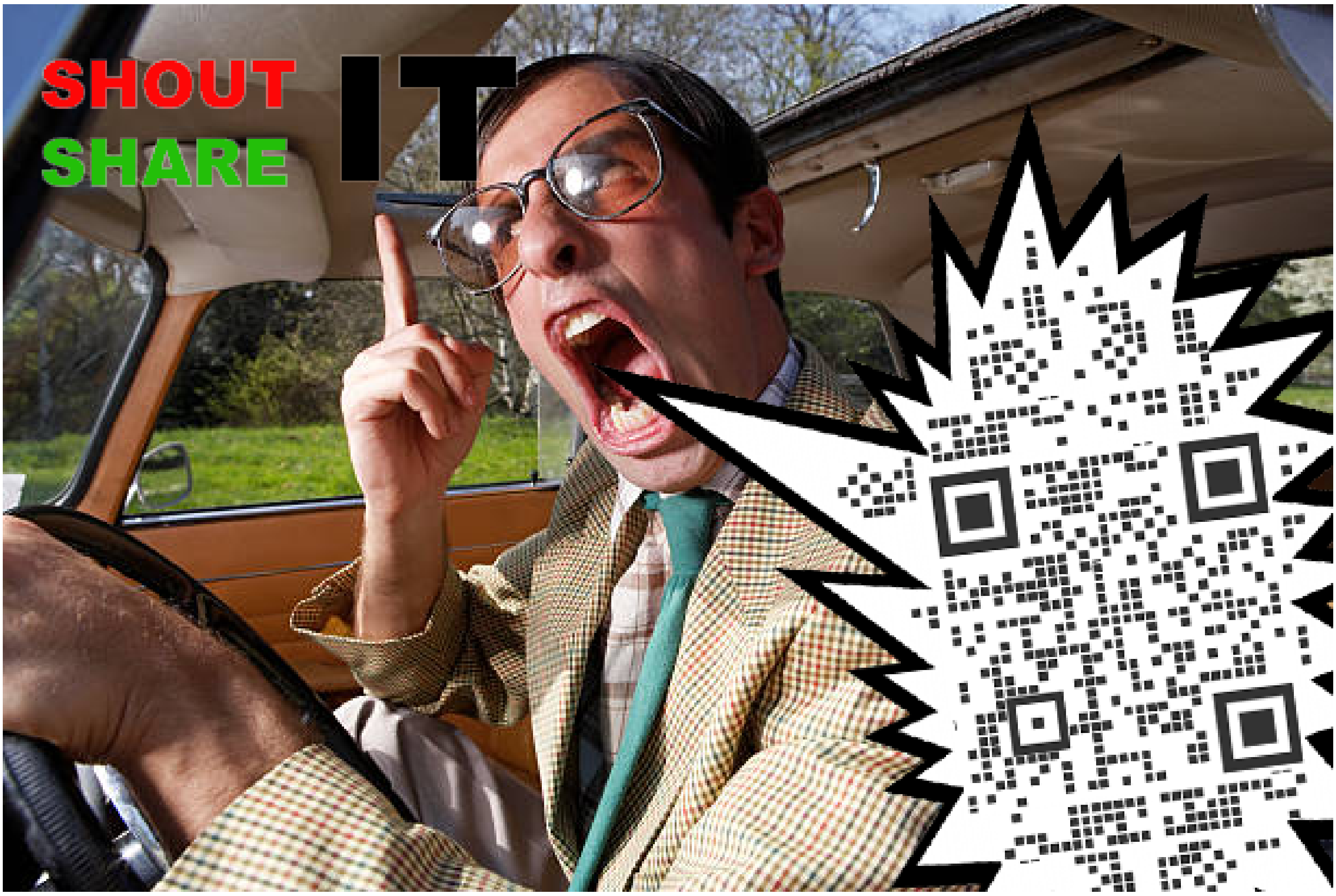
Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT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IT

Conference registration is $85 per person. For more information about the conference, contact Burwash in Airdrie at (403) 948-8538. Government numbers are toll-free by dialing 310-0000 first. On site registration is available.

Contact: *Les Burwash*
(403) 948-8538

Aquaponics, an environmentally friendly production system

This may be the very first time livestock have been part of the research at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS) in Brooks. An exciting collaborative project between the greenhouse crops program and the aquaculture group at Lethbridge has become a reality.

"It was with great enthusiasm that the Alberta Agriculture staff working on the Brooks Aquaponic Facility (BAF) hosted a group of producers, feed suppliers, researchers, business development folks and even a hog producer, looking for a way to handle effluent, at CDCS for a meeting and tour of the project," says Shelley Barkley, information officer at CDCS. "Researchers outlined what's next for the BAF, and their plans include running the facility at a commercial level and securing funds to keep the project operating for the next year. Producers talked about their successes and the possible markets for both fish and plants from aquaponic systems, even targeting the very lucrative ornamental water plant market. Business development specialists want to build a market that drives what is being produced."

The pilot project is an integrated fish production and hydroponic specialty vegetable production system. Put the two together and the aquaponic system results in a healthy environment for rearing fish and a no-fertilizer, no-pesticide system for growing vegetables. "The closed loop system mimics a natural system: the fish consume food and their waste is naturally converted to nitrate and other nutrients, the nutrients in the water are then taken up by the plants," says Dr. Nick Savidov, greenhouse crops specialist at CDCS. "The fish supply necessary plant supplements and the plants act as a natural water filter, a win/win continuum."

The project started two years ago as a prototype at Lethbridge Community College led by Eric Hutchings, provincial aquaculture specialist with Alberta Agriculture. There has been a growing interest in Alberta to develop aquaponic production technology. A small demonstration unit also existed at Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN) in Edmonton, however, BAF is the only aquaponic system in the province that is of commercial production size and capable of determining an accruate economic evaluation of aquaponics.

"This existing aquaponic unit is designed for growing tilapia, a warm water fish," says Hutchings. "A second unit for growing cold water fish is planned to be added to BAF within the next few years. The cold water unit is especially important for Alberta because trout is the most common species grown in our fish farms."

The construction of an aquaponic system can be accomplished within a few weeks and with basic building skills. The plants are grown in concrete troughs lined with plastic. The fish growing components are standard for raising fish and include round tanks, clarifiers, pumps, air blowers, pipes and a heat exchanger.

The BAF project, led by Hutchings and Savidov, is expected to be a major Centre for research in the emerging aquaponic industry in foreseeable future. The first results will be available in early 2003. An open house of the facility is planned for late May 2003.

On December 12, 2002, the Alberta Aquaponics Group (AAG) was founded in order to promote the industry and provide support for BAF. Curt Naughton, president of Alberta Fish Farmers Association, and Victoria Page, Green View Aqua Farm, and Doug Millar, Circle M Trout Farm, pioneers of aquaponics in Alberta, were among the AAG founders. Alberta Agriculture has formed an advisory board to provide necessary expertise. This team includes Hutchings, Savidov, Mike Dolinski (Organic Farming, Business and Innovation), Nabi Chaudhary (Economic Feasibility, Economics and Competitiveness), Mohyuddin Mirza (Greenhouse Business, Business and Innovation), Janice Warren and Belinda Choban (Marketing Studies, Business and Innovation). The University of Alberta and Lethbridge Community College were represented by Professor Emeritus W.C. Mackay from the Department of Biological Sciences. One of the AAG tasks will be fund-raising to support BAF as a research resource for the province. Technology transfer is another important role of AAG.

"Direct supply of branded aquaponically grown fresh produce to restaurants will be an important factor in building this new niche market," says Dolinski. "During recent Chef's Association meetings in Edmonton, there was great interest shown by chefs to buy locally produced specialty and new high value products."

"What comes out of the aquaponic greenhouses has to be a product that consumers and chefs can't get from other markets, it has to be a quality product and be available at a competitive price," says Savidov. "Produce such as young zucchini, ethnic vegetables, mini vegetables and edible flowers are on the list for testing in the first year."

Cont'd on page 3

An introduction to aquaponics course is being held at CDCS on March 7 and 8, 2003. This course will be especially helpful to greenhouse producers, fish farmers and other people interested in diversifying the scope of their land-based enterprises. Registraiton cost is $125 per person (includes GST). Only 30 course participants can be accommodated, so early registration is recommended. For further information or to register, contact Karen Block (403) 394-7344, or e-mail <k.block@lethbridgecollege.ab.ca>. Registration forms indicating Course ID Code #867181C01 and payment should be mailed to Lethbridge College, Registration Office, 3000 College Drive S., Lethbridge, AB T1K 1L6.

Contact: Eric Hutchings
(403) 381-5574
Mike Dolinski
(780) 422-4873
Nick Savidov
(403) 362-1312

Chronic Wasting Disease

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a progressive, fatal, degenerative disease of the brain affecting elk, mule deer and white-tailed deer. The disease belongs to the Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) group of related diseases. TSEs also include Scrapie in sheep and goats, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle and Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) in humans.

While this group of diseases is similar in that prions, abnormal proteins in the brain, cause the disease, CWD is different than BSE, and there is no scientific evidence that it can be naturally transmissible to humans or other livestock species. There is currently no treatment or vaccine available for CWD.

CWD takes considerable time to manifest itself in clinical symptoms, in fact it may take years for the animal to reach the point where it exhibits signs of disease. As more brain tissue is affected with the prions, animals may exhibit loss of condition, excessive salivation, trouble swallowing, difficulty in judging distance, drooping ears and changes in their behaviour.

The only way to diagnose CWD is by examining a section of brain tissue after the animal is dead. This immunohistochemistry (IHC) staining is the international standard of diagnosis. Unfortunately, other diseases manifest themselves with similar symptoms, meaning that suspect animals must be killed before they can be tested, positive or negative the animal is still lost.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has produced an Agri-Facts factsheet ***Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) of Elk and Deer***. The factsheet (Agdex #663-43) explains what this federally-reportable disease is, what symptoms are associated with the disease, how it is transmitted, where it has occurred and what the Province's role is in containing any confirmed cases of CWD.

The factsheet is available free of charge from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office. Call the Publications Office toll free at 1-800-292-5657; e-mail <publications.office@gov.ab.ca>; or send a written request for the information to Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6. The factsheet is also posted on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/600/663-43.html>.

Also, the Alberta Cooperative Conservation Research Unit (ACCRU), Alberta Conservation Association and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development are co-sponsoring a conference, ***Chronic Wasting Disease Conference – Alberta Implications*** on January 11, 2003, at the Nisku Inn, Nisku.

This conference is especially designed to provide information on CWD to hunters, conservation officers, wildlife biologists, researchers, students, deer and elk ranchers, veterinarians and other concerned stakeholders.

For conference information or to register for the conference, contact Judy Jacobs (780) 492-3554, or visit the conference webpage at <www.accru.rr.ualberta.ca/CWD_Conference>.

Contact: Alberta Ag-Info Centre
1-866-882-7677
ACCRU
(780) 492-3554

Attractions, activities and events down on the farm

When Tamra and Tom Davison welcome visitors to their farm, they do it with style. The Davisons operate Davison Orchards in the Okanagan Valley, B.C. The farm has been in the family since 1933, but 16 years ago, the farm barely made enough money to support their payments. "We weren't making any money shipping apples," says Tamra. They really wanted to farm, however, so they had to do something different. They first tried to grow different varieties of apples that would gain higher prices. To generate income while the new varieties matured they planted tomatoes in rows between the trees and began selling direct to the public.

"Today, Davison Orchards is a family owned and operated farm consisting of 50 acres of fruits and vegetables, a farm market, a country gift shop, a bakery and also features a picnic and children's play area," reports Marian Williams of the Explore Direct conference organizing committee and member of the Farm Direct Marketing Initiative, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Camrose. "The Apple Crate Farm Bakery

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features freshly baked fruit pies, homemade soups, apple slushes, muffins and more. The farm market features fresh homegrown produce in season, special blend apple juice pressed on the farm, beautiful flowers grown on the farm, jams and jellies and even a cookbook with time-tested recipes."

Last year an estimated 230,000 people visited the Davison farm. There is much to see and do including touring the orchard, visiting the farm memories museum, and feeding the farm animals. The operation also hosts special events such as Mother's Day Blossom Tours, Country Gospel Music Festival on Canada Day, 4-H Day, Gone Corn Crazy days, Apple Harvest Hoedown and Quilt Show and a Pumpkin Festival. More information on Davison Orchards can be found on their web site <www.davisonorchards.ca>.

Tamra Davison explains, "There are endless opportunities in direct marketing and a long lists of things that can be tried on the farm." The only mistake that they made was underestimating the demand for their products and services; they keep having to expand buildings as the crowds grow. One word of advice thought, "You've got to love people, you've got to love working with them and putting up with all their funny quirks. And, you've got to have a showplace farm- people don't want to see mud and dirt and manure," she says.

Tamra Davison is one of the speakers at the ***Explore Direct*** conference in Red Deer on January 20 to 22, 2003. She will be leading two sessions – *Creative Attractions, Activities and Events on the Farm and Farm Stores* and *A New Frontier*.

"Albertans interested in farm direct marketing should attend ***Explore Direct*** to maximize their farm direct marketing profits," suggests Williams.

Alberta Agriculture and the Alberta Farmers' Market Association are co-hosting ***Explore Direct***. It is a conference that explores marketing rural Alberta products direct to consumers. Topics will focus on four program streams: farmers' market, new ideas, farm direct marketed meat and planning for change.

"A full day pre-conference workshop, *Innovative Merchandizing* with international merchandizing expert John Stanley, is featured on January 20. This workshop is complements the conference program," says Williams. "The Tuesday evening feature, a *Winter Stew Festival*, includes a savoury, simmering variety of Alberta's finest farm direct marketed regional fare.

Registration for the conference and the pre-conference workshop is $175. For further information or to register, call (780) 679-1362, toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first.

Conference information is also available on the internet at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/economic/mgmt/diversification/main.html>.

Contact: *Marian Williams*
(780) 679-1360

Kyoto and greenhouse gases key topics at FarmTech 2003

"***FarmTech 2003*** is the place to be to get information on emerging environmental issues, including the impact of the Kyoto Accord on agriculture and the potential for carbon sequestration and emissions trading," says Rick Taillieu, media and promotions coordinator for the conference and agronomist with RT LINKAGES, Olds. ***FarmTech 2003*** is being held at the Mayfield Inn & Suites, Edmonton, on January 29 to 31, 2003.

Kyoto and Agriculture – where do we fit? is the topic of a super panel on January 31. Panelists include producer John Bennett from the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association, Cheryl Arkison from EPCOR Utilities and Peter Johnson from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. "The panelists represent farmers, energy producers and government," says Kenton Ziegler chair of ***FarmTech 2003***. "The issues surrounding Kyoto are going to affect agriculture, and this session will examine the implications to individual farmers."

A concurrent session featuring Bennett and Arkison will examine the potential for carbon sequestration and carbon trading. "There is the potential for carbon sequestration to be an added value as well as an added cost to producers," explains Bennett. "Carbon sequestering allows the agricultural community a unique opportunity to show their urban neighbours the clear link between soil stewardship, clean air and water."

The conference features 34 concurrent sessions, the Friday super panel, Farmers-Helping-Farmers workshops and agricultural showcase exhibits and special events. For more information call 1-866-327-6832 or visit <www.farmtechconference.com>.

Registration for the conference includes three days' sessions, three lunches and the dinner banquet on Thursday. Early bird registration rates are: $175 per person, $250 per farm pair and $60 per student. The deadline for early bird registration is January 10. After January 10, registration rates are: $225 per person, $300 per farm pair and $60 per student. Please add GST to all registration fees.

For full conference details visit <http://www.farmtechconference.com>.

Contact: *Rick Taillieu*
(403) 556-8235
E-mail: rick.taillieu@gov.ab.ca

Agri-News Briefs

Alberta Elk Convention 2003 "Working Together For Our Future"

The Alberta Elk Convention will be held January 16 to 18, 2003 at the Grande Prairie Quality Hotel and Conference Centre, Grande Prairie, AB. This year's conference will host a variety of guest speakers and seminars, along with a silent auction, hay auction and semen auction. A banquet and dance will be held Saturday evening. A trade fair show will run Thursday evening through Saturday and the public are invited to attend this show free of charge. John Berry will be hosting cooking demonstrations featuring Alberta Ranched Elk. Elk meat is a healthy, nutritious, quality product that is affordable. This event will also be open to the public. For more information contact Alberta Elk at (780) 980-7582.

Organic conference

The 4th annual ***Going Organic*** conference is being held at the Capri Centre in Red Deer on February 9 to 11, 2003. Speaker topics will cover the production, research and marketing aspects of the growing organic industry, with an emphasis on the organic family farm. Presentations include: The Sustainability of the Organic Family Farm; Research on Organic Production, Prices and Possibilities; How to Develop Market Focused Niche Opportunities; and, Painting a Picture of the Future. The evening banquet, February 10, features speaker Frank Flaman, founder of Flaman Sales and Equipment Rentals, self-made businessman, inventor, research scientist, humanitarian, philanthropist and supporter of organic agriculture is the featured speaker. His information packed and entertaining presentation, *How I See Things!* is sure to make it an enjoyable evening. Registration rates for the 2003 conference are $95 per person for early bird registration received before January 17, 2003 and $80 for each additional member of the same farm unit. The registration cost after January 17 is $135 per person, $110 for each additional member of the same farm unit. Please add GST to all registration costs. For more information, to register or to book a trade show space, call the Alberta Organic Association, toll free at 1-866-262-9907 or (780) 930-7051.

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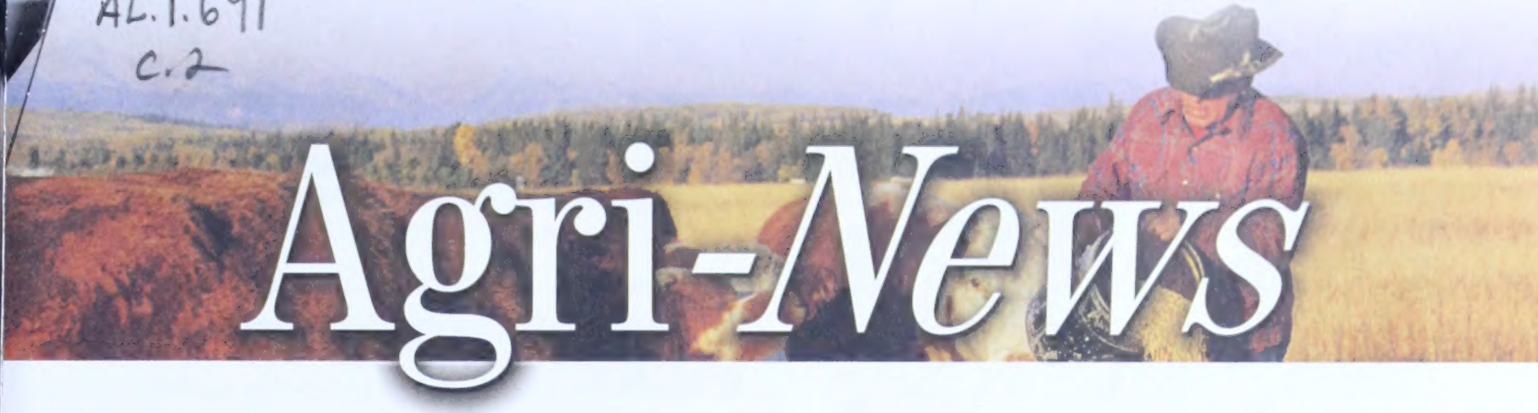

Agri-News

January 13, 2003

Minerals, minerals, minerals

Beef producers have to be especially aware of possible mineral problems in this year's feed rations. The mineral profiles of many of the feeds that were grown in this past summer's drought conditions are very different than average. These mineral variations or imbalances may prove to have detrimental consequences on the upcoming calving and breeding seasons.

"The first mineral of concern is potassium," says Trevor Yurchak, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Athabasca. "Potassium is a huge concern with cereal forages, both silage and greenfeed. Many cereal crop feed samples have been tested with results coming back showing very high levels of potassium (K), some as high as 3.0 per cent, whereas 1.5 per cent is normal. High potassium by itself is not necessarily a concern, but combined with lower than average calcium (Ca) and magnesium (Mg), the "tetany ratio" could cause problems. The tetany ratio is defined as potassium divided by the calcium plus magnesium, and should be below 2.2:1."

If the tetany ratio in feed is above 2.2:1, as is the case with many rations this winter, the probability of health problems and conditions such as winter tetany, milk fever and "downer cows" is high. Over the past two years, these health problems have been evident, but producers have not associated them with nutrition. They may have noticed weak cows at calving, especially cows with twins, but have not attributed it to minerals. This year may prove to be even worse if proper mineral programs are not followed. The ration-balancing program ***Cowbytes*** automatically monitors this tetany ratio.

"The simplest solution is to feed a high potassium feed blended with a feed that is lower in potassium," says Yurchak. "This blending process is the easiest and most cost effective solution."

In many cases, feeding a good 1:1 mineral may solve the ratio issue. Some companies have good 2:1 minerals, or even straight calcium minerals tailored to cereal forage rations. These are very good choices, but, in some instances mineral supplements may not be enough. In some cases, where potassium is over 2.5 per cent, supplemental calcium in the form of limestone, or calcium/magnesium combinations, may be needed in addition to the above mineral programs. It is very important to feed test and work with your feed company or nutritionist to ensure a proper balance of minerals is being ingested by your herd."

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The second mineral of concern is sulfur in canola feeds. Canola, as a crop, uses high amounts of sulfur as it grows. In turn, canola feed can have high levels of sulfur. An average feed sample of cereal silage contains 0.25 per cent sulfur, whereas numerous feed tests this year of canola silage and canola greenfeed have shown sulfur content of over 1.0 per cent. High sulfur in beef rations can 'tie up' copper and selenium, leading to calving season health problems such as retained placentas, difficult calving, decreased milk production and scours, and reduced conception rates. High sulfur can also tie up thiamine, which results in polio. Symptoms of higher than recommended sulfur include blindness, head pressing, convulsions, tremors and animal down. Animals that go off their feed is one of the mild symptoms associated with high sulfur.

"Sulfur is not routinely analyzed in feed testing," adds Yurchak. "Therefore, producers requesting feed tests on canola feeds should specifically request an additional test for sulfur. These feed tests should then be used when consulting with a nutritionist to balance feed rations."

Management for high sulfur feeds, as for high potassium feeds, can be as simple as dilution; feeding a high sulfur feed blended with a feed that is lower in sulfur. Another solution is to work with your feed company to increase the copper and selenium content of the mineral package, which effectively compensates for the unavailable portion of these minerals that is being tied up by the high sulfur content. Also, an injection of selenium for the cows prior to calving or for the calf at birth may reduce selenium deficiency problems. Always be sure to consult with your veterinarian.

"These mineral imbalances and problems are very easy to prevent or solve with the proper awareness and feed testing," concludes Yurchak. "Work with your nutritionist and feed company to make the necessary changes and management decisions. Without awareness and management changes, the upcoming calving season could turn out to be one producers won't soon forget. It is estimated that 80 per cent of calving season health problems are management and nutrition related. Don't get caught with a situation that was preventable, or that is easily fixed."

Cowbytes is a ration balancing software program designed by Alberta Agriculture to meet the needs of the beef industry. It is very user friendly, cost effective and will help producers or consultants balance their own rations and understand proper beef nutrition. The program is available through Alberta Agriculture at a cost of $150 (plus GST) and can be ordered by calling (780) 427-4309. For toll free access in Alberta, dial 310-0000 first.

More details on ***Cowbytes*** and a demo version are available on Alberta Agriculture's web site <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ruraldev/homestdy/cowbytes.html>.

If you have any questions, or require further assistance on this topic, please call the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.

Contact: *Trevor Yurchak* *Ag-Info Centre*
(780) 675-8219 *1-866-882-7677*

Organic conference a growing concern

The fourth annual ***Growing Organic*** conference is being held on February 9 to 11, 2003 at the Capri Centre in Red Deer. The conference is organized by the Alberta Organic Association, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

"Organic production has been growing, gaining popularity and gaining support for the last several years," says Mike Dolinski, organic specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "It is estimated that organic product sales have increased by approximately 20 per cent and now account for between one and two per cent of Canada's food purchases, which translates into a value of $1.4 billion."

The theme this year is ***Family Farm Opportunities***, focusing the conference on the family aspects of many organic operations. The ***Growing Organic*** conference is a wonderful opportunity for already established organic producers and for producers considering organic growing as an alternative. Topics and speakers for the conference will focus on both the production and marketing aspects of organic growing.

Production and research:

- **The Sustainability of the Organic Family Farm** – Dr. John Ikerd, Professor Emeritus of Agriculture Economics at the University of Missouri
- **Farming for our Family's Future** – the Hamilton Family, who own and operate Sunworks Farm near Armena
- **Rangeland & Cropping Systems Under Low-Input and Organic Management** – Dr. Jill Clapperton, Alberta's internationally recognized rhizosphere ecologist, Agriculture Agri-Food Canada research station in Lethbridge
- **Research on Organic Production, Prices and Possibilities** – Dr. Ralph Martin, professor in Plant Science at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and the architect of the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada (OACC)
- **Pest Management in an Agronomic World** – Dr. George Clayton, research scientist at the Agriculture Agri-Food Canada Research Centre in Lacombe, developing crop and animal production systems division

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- **Aquaponics: An Opportunity for the Organic Industry in Alberta** – Eric Hutchings, provincial aquaculture specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Brooks, who is responsible for establishing the first aquaponics facility in Alberta at the Crop Development Centre South

Marketing:

- **How to Develop Market Focused Niche Opportunities** – Tony Marshall, owner and operator of Highwood Crossing Farm in Aldersyde, and Chef Glen Manzer, chef at Calgary's award winning River Café
- **The Slow Food Movement** – Gail Norton, member of Slow Food Calgary
- **Our Family Roots in Organics** – Campbell Family, who built Organic Roots Food Market, a family-run organic retail outlet near the University of Alberta, Edmonton
- **Organics for all Creatures!** – Randy Johnson, founder of Harvest Sun Seed & Grain, he and his family produce and distribute the world's only certified organic birdseed blends for companion birds

"This conference has been a huge success in previous years and we anticipate even greater attendance this year," adds Dolinski. "One of the highlights of the conference will be the banquet presentation on the evening of February 10 entitled, *How I See Things!* The speaker, Frank Flaman is the founder of Flaman Sales and Equipment Rentals, a self-made business man, inventor, research scientist and supporter of organic agriculture."

Registration rates for the 2003 conference are $95 per person for early bird registration received before January 17, 2003 and $80 for each additional member of the same farm unit. The registration cost after January 17 is $135 per person, $110 for each additional member of the same farm unit. Please add GST to all registration costs. For more information, to register or to book a trade show space, call the Alberta Organic Association, toll free at 1-866-262-9907, (780) 930-7051, or fax (780) 930-7052.

Contact: Mike Dolinski
(780) 422-4873

Black currant diseases in Alberta in 2002

Black currant berries are an enriched source of vitamin C and can be eaten fresh or processed into juice, jam, wine or syrup. Their extreme cold hardiness makes them perfectly adaptable for large-scale production in Alberta.

"Black currant crops can be mechanically harvested in August and have tremendous potential for commercial development," says Dr. Kan-Fa Chang, plant pathologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "So far, approximately 350 to 400 acres of commercial black currants have been established in Alberta, concentrated in the Red Deer, Fort MacLeod, Lethbridge and Taber areas."

The Alberta Crop Industry Development Fund (ACIDF) is supporting a project on Integrated Crop Management of Black Currants in Alberta to promote expansion of this crop in the province. The project is lead by Dr. Ken Fry, an entomologist from the Alberta Research Council at Vegreville.

Dr. Chang and Dr. Ron Howard, researchers at the CDCS, are investigating black currant diseases as part of this project. In a survey of currant orchards in the summer of 2002, they found that rust was epidemic in all black currant orchards surveyed in southern Alberta due to the prevailing cool, wet weather. Many growers experienced rust infection for the first time on their third-year crops.

"Rust infections first appeared in early August, and by mid-September, the lower leaves of susceptible plants were entirely covered with pustules, causing early defoliation," says Howard. "The disease situation in central Alberta was quite different; no rust or powdery mildew were observed, but root rot caused up to 30 per cent mortality in several first-year orchards, and stem canker was observed in one orchard. Root rot also occurred in one black currant orchard near Lethbridge."

The most commonly grown black currant cultivars, Ben Alder and Ben Lomond, are highly susceptible to rust, but resistant to powdery mildew. Another popular cultivar, Titania, is immune to both powdery mildew and rust. Some rust-resistant cultivars are available through breeding and screening programs in the U.S., Canada and Poland, and more are being developed.

"Growing resistant currant cultivars is the most economical measure to control rust, but growers may prefer susceptible cultivars because they are hardier, more available, taste better, or are easier to process," says Chang. "Therefore, the disease study includes fungicidal treatments to give growers options for disease control."

There are very few registered fungicides presently available in Canada for controlling black currant diseases and very limited information in the research literature, so Alberta is taking a leadership role in developing this knowledge.

The research showed clearly that root rot diseases could pose a severe threat to seedling establishment in some orchards and their control should be further studied.

For more information on diseases affecting black current cultivars, contact Dr. Kan-Fa Chang (403) 362-1334 or Dr. Ron Howard (403) 362-1328.

Contact: Dr. Kan-Fa Chang
(403) 362-1334

Dr. Ron Howard
(403) 361-1328

Factsheets for horse owners

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development produced a series of Agri-Facts factsheets specifically addressing some of the needs of horse owners in the province. Stallions, mares, foals and performance horses each have unique feeding requirements, and horse owners should keep those special needs in mind when designing a feeding regimen for individual horses.

Understanding body conditioning of horses is a great place to start when setting a nutritional program. ***Body Condition Scoring Your Horse*** (Agdex #460/20-1) explains what body scoring is and what factors can affect body condition. This factsheet includes diagrams showing where to check horses to determine fat deposition. Descriptions of body condition characteristics of scores from 1-poor to 9-extremely fat are well detailed. Also, descriptions of ideal condition for different classes of horses are given as a guide.

Feeding Young Horses for Sound Growth (Agdex 460/50-2); ***Feeding the Stallion*** (Agdex 460/50-3); ***Feeding Working and Performance Horses*** (Agdex 460/50-5); and, ***Feeding the Broodmare*** (Agdex 460/50-6) give suggestions for feeding horses according to their age and use.

One ration does not fit all when it comes to feeding horses. Required nutrients can differ greatly depending on performance or reproductive stresses the horse is under or the age and growth rate the young horse is experiencing. Feeding horses correctly is very important, and these factsheets present a solid nutritional base and guidelines that can be used when designing a feeding program for your horse. For further information or additional advice, contact your veterinarian.

These factsheets are available free of charge from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office. Call the Publications Office toll free at 1-800-292-5657; e-mail <publications.office@gov.ab.ca>; or send a written request for the information to Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6. The factsheets are also posted on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/400_ind.html>.

Contact: Publications Office
1-800-292-5657
(780) 427-0391

Agri-education a great way to diversify

For most farms agri-education means providing a quality agricultural, education experience for school children and adults. Agri-education can be incorporated into many existing farm direct marketing operations quite easily.

"Some farms are taking advantage of the growing trend to diversify specifically into offering school tours," says Kerry Engel, farm direct marketing specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "School tour are developmentally and age-appropriate for the Kindergarten to Grade 3 child. The tours need to provide hands-on and interactive activities to keep the attention and interest of this age group, they should include some written and verbal information geared to the developmental level of the group, and they must be fun!"

Agri-education isn't limited to school tours, it can be incorporated into other agri-tourism and farm direct marketing events such as festivals, corporate retreats, farm stores, mazes and birthday parties. Agri-education allows farmers to reinforce the vital link between what's happening on the farm to what's happening in the consumer's daily life.

For example, Leslie Forsythe from Forsythe Family Farms in Ontario conducts school tours over seven months. She has found that there are many benefits to offering tours, including:

- additional use of their facility during quieter business times
- alternative income not totally dependent on the weather or the crops available
- good exposure to large number of children – they bring back parents
- an interesting and challenging change from production
- better profit margin

"When planning the activities that will be offered, remember that not all activities are an experience for both parents and kids," adds Engel. "It's important to first identify the audience (kids, adults or both), then determine the costs and returns. Farm managers need to know how many admissions will be needed to pay for an attraction and which attractions give the greatest impact. Don't forget to also assess safety and liability issues."

Over the years, Forsythe has encountered some difficulties associated with hosting tours.

Cont'd on page 5

She has gradually developed a number of different policies to make their tours run smoothly and the keep her staff happy. Some of these policies include:

- adult to student ratio when billing
- cancellation policy
- confirmation reply forms and deposits for tours booked
- extended time billing for lunch
- litterless lunches
- minimum charge for half day and full day tours

"School tours can be a positive addition to a farm marketing strategy," says Engel. "These special tours can be a challenge, and many farm operators try to constantly improve them each year and keep the tours relevant for the teachers. As a learning opportunity, farm tours can offer so much to students, teachers and farm operators alike."

A checklist of a few things that should be addressed prior to each tour:

- name cards
- allergies
- dress suggestions
- insect repellent
- sun protection
- special needs
- shopping opportunities
- special requests
- directions
- reservations
- greeting procedures upon arrival
- rules

Pricing structure for tours varies from farm to farm and depends on what sort of "add-ons" are incorporated into the event. Everything from rental of tents to hay rides to catering costs need to be considered and factored in.

School tours, on average, are charged from $4 to $6 per child and some Alberta farms accepting bus tours are charging up to $100 per bus. Rates on children's birthday parties vary from a per head charge of approximately $6 per child to group rates as high as $199 for a group of eight children.

"Many farm direct marketers are seeing a leveling of growth in product sales," says Engel. "Being able to capitalize on an increasing demand for corporate and other group activities on the farm is one way of further diversifying and gaining extra value from admissions, school tours and group outings to help make the farm more profitable."

For sample policies and confirmation letters contact Kerry Engel (780) 349-4466 or Marian Williams with Alberta Agriculture's Farm Direct Marketing Initiative in Camrose, (780) 679-1360.

The ***Explore Direct*** conference, Alberta's only farm direct marketing conference, is being held in Red Deer on January 20 to 22, 2003. For a registration package, call (780) 679-1362 (toll free access in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first). Conference and registration information is also available on-line at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/economic/mgmt/diversification/main.html>.

Contact:	*Kerry Engel*	*Marian Williams*
	(780) 349-4466	*(780) 679-1360*

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Agri-News Briefs

Changing trends in agriculture

Changing Trends in Agriculture: What's your Opportunity? is the theme of the morning Canadian Agri-Marketing Association (CAMA) Alberta seminar being held in Calgary, on January 22, 2003. The morning presentations include: *A Review of the Competitive Position of Alberta's Primary Beef Production Sector* by Dale Kaliel, senior economist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; *Reputation for Quality*; Mark Kaun, president of the Alberta Branch, Canadian Seed Growers Association; *Strategic Factors Impacting the Reality of Doing Agri-Business*, Bob Burden, partner with Serecon Management Consulting Inc.; and, *Carbon Credit Trading and the Future Economic Implications for Agriculture*, Janet Peace, director of Climate Change Central and Adjunct Assistant Professor, University of Calgary. A panel discussion will give attendees a chance to participate in a question and answer discussion. The luncheon presentation by Tom Thompson, president of Olds College, will discuss *Changes in Rural Alberta and Canada: Positioning Olds College for Tomorrow's Challenges*. For further information or to register, contact Connie Pruden at (403) 244-4487 or e-mail <conniep@associationsplus.ca>.

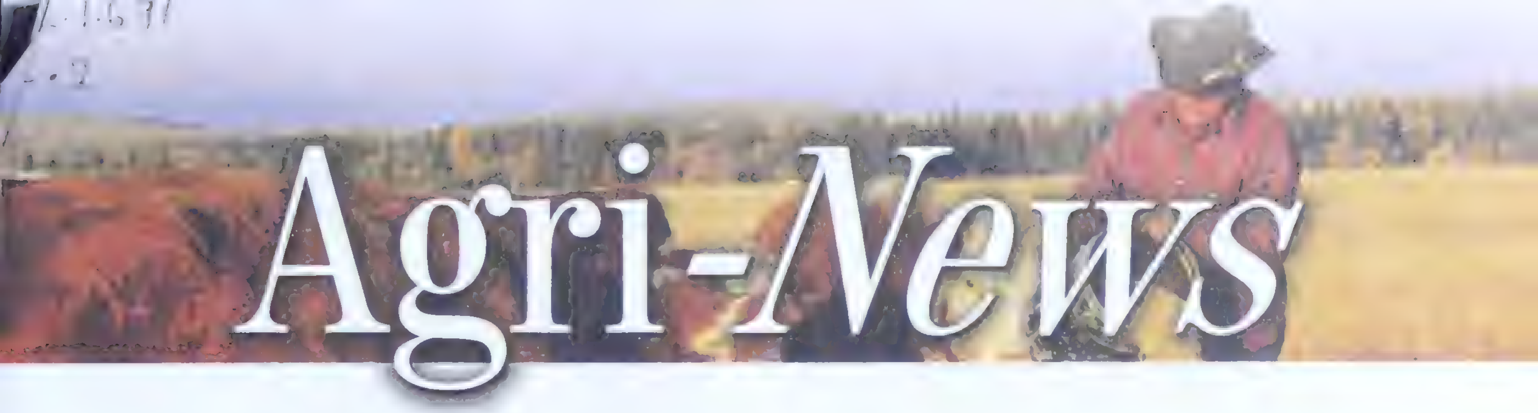
Brush management workshop

Brush control is a key issue in pasture improvement in Canada. The invasion of woody plants, such as aspen, balsam poplar and several species of willow, means lower carrying capacity of pastures, something the expanding livestock industry takes a serious stand on. A workshop on ***Integrated Brush Management*** is being held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on February 18 and 19, 2003. Organized by the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council (CARC), the Expert Committee on Forage Crops and representatives from the Public Lands Branches of the three prairie provinces, the workshop will provide up-to-date information on the issues and methods involved in brush control to reduce pasture maintenance costs.

Registration is $135 per person (plus GST) for early registration received before January 15, 2003, and $150 per person (plus GST) for registration received after that date. For further information, contact Bruce Coulman at (306) 956-7240 or email <coulmanb@agr.gc.ca>.

Alberta Berry School

The 2003 Commercial Berry School is being held at the Red Deer Lodge on February 28 and March 1, 2003. The Alberta Market Gardeners Association (AMGA) and the Fruit Growers Society of Alberta (FGSA) have combined efforts to create a complete and diverse program with information about commercial fruit production in Alberta. Registrants will have the opportunity of selecting specific production or market focused sessions. The production tract will cover both general and specific production practices including diseases, insects and weeds. Space is limited, so early registration is recommended. For further information on the program and registration, contact Joyce Megson (403) 748-2289 or e-mail <megsonj@telusplanet.net>.



Agri-News

January 20, 2003

Berry Talk 2003

Interest in commercial berry production continues to grow in Alberta. New entrepreneurs continue to be attracted to this new venture, and seasoned producers continue to expand their acreages.

"While many producers of traditional crops did not fair that well last year in Alberta, many berry producers received good returns," says Lloyd Hausher, provincial fruit industry development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks.

The demand for fresh, locally produced fruit continues to grow in the province, he says. "The consuming public is looking for exceptional quality, fresh berries that are produced locally so that they can talk to the growers who produced it. Alberta-produced berries are becoming more available at the many Farmers' Markets and retail outlets each year."

Locally produced berries, such as strawberries, raspberries, and Saskatoons are increasingly available at the farm gate where consumers can either pick-their-own, or purchase them pre-picked. The majority of the farm locations also offer additional family – oriented amenities including fish ponds, petting animals, or picnic facilities to name a few.

Alberta is also rapidly developing a commercial black currant industry. All black currant acreage and a large proportion of the Saskatoon acreage are commercially harvested by machines with the fruit further processed into juices, jams and pie fillings.

"Producing fruit in Alberta is more labor intensive than other types of traditional agriculture," adds Hausher. "There are specific requirements for each crop, and a good knowledge of available markets is essential. On the positive side, entrepreneurs do not require a great amount of capital to get started, there is a demand for most crops, and producers can obtain a very good return on a small amount of land."

Presently there are two organizations representing berry growers in Alberta: the Fruit Growers Society of Alberta (FGSA) and the direct marketers association the Alberta Market Gardeners Association (AMGA). These two organizations have combined efforts this year to sponsor a joint ***Berry Production School***. The school will be an opportunity to update established producers and introduce new or prospective growers to the industry.

The Alberta Berry School is being held February 28 and March 1, 2003 at the Red Deer Lodge, Red Deer. Anyone interested in commercially producing strawberries, raspberries, Saskatoons, or black currants won't want to miss this event.

For more information, contact Joyce Megson (403) 748-2289 or Hausher (403) 362-1309.

Contact: Lloyd Hausher (403) 362-1309

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Agri-News **Information Packaging Centre, Tel: (780) 427-2121 Fax: (780) 427-2861**

Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@gov.ab.ca

Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Reduced tillage and direct seeding no longer mysterious

The dramatic rise in Alberta acres under reduced tillage and direct seeding over the last decade has resulted in these practices becoming more a part of everyday agriculture.

The 2001 Canadian Agricultural census shows that over 27 per cent of the province's annually seeded crops are now no-till (direct seeded) and 35 per cent are reduced tillage. These numbers represent a dramatic rise of 725 per cent in no-till acres and 38 per cent in reduced tillage acres in the ten years since the 1991 census.

"Reduced tillage and direct seeding have given the industry a whole new vocabulary to describe seeding practices," says Don Wentz, reduced tillage agronomist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge. "For example, when we talk about conventional tillage we mean traditional tillage operations that producers practiced to control weeds and develop a seedbed. Reduced tillage, meanwhile, refers to seeding with less tillage passes to keep more crop residue on the soil surface. More crop residue means less wind erosion and moisture loss from evaporation."

Wentz says that direct seeding, or no-till, is seeding into undisturbed soil and crop stubble. "This popular practice uses either a high-disturbance system where producers use a cultivator-type seeding implement to plant their crops in a single operation, or, a low-disturbance system which uses a narrow knife opener or disk opener to place the seed in the ground with very little surface soil disturbance."

Besides the moisture-saving associated with reduced tillage or no-till, Wentz says producers are also finding that following these practices saves time, especially during the critical seeding period, and reduces equipment wear. He says these factors have helped reduced tillage and direct seeding become the fastest-growing seeding practices in Alberta.

A group working actively to continue this increase in reduced tillage and direct-seeded acres is the Reduced Tillage LINKAGES (RTL). RTL is a unique partnership with broad-based farmer, industry, educational, wildlife and government support. The partners have pooled financial and in-kind resources to develop an extension program focused on improving the environmental and economic sustainability of farming in Alberta.

In the fall of 2001 the group launched its web page at <www.reducedtillage.ca>. It is a knowledge-based site that contains information on all aspects of reduced tillage from equipment to soil and plant diseases. It has proved to be popular, with an average of 153 visits per day in 2002. On the site, RTL agronomists have their own section that highlights activities specific to their region. As well, the page has information on up-coming events for RTL and related agricultural events, as well as links to other web pages that contain information on reduced tillage and related management issues.

Contact: *Don Wentz*
(403) 381-5857

Tiffin conference series underway

"The ***2003 Tiffin Conference*** is a series of three individual programs bringing world class learning opportunities to southern Alberta farmers and ranchers as well as the agriculture industry leaders," says Jan Warren, business development officer with Alberta Agriculture, Lethbridge. "The first program was held on January 9, 2003. The presentations addressed issues producers must concern themselves with to sustain a profitable business and boost consumer confidence. The January 9 speakers were chosen from the livestock industry, and the sessions dealt with the industry outlook, breeding and genetics and environmental issues. A Kansas rancher who has issues with the processing industry and is using direct marketing in his operation was one of the featured speakers. The evening speaker showed slides and explained the culture of livestock production and trading in China, which made attendees think seriously about how to fill foreign needs from Alberta."

On ***February 13***, sessions will focus on building a future in the agriculture business beyond production and will take a look at the next level in the value chain. Larry Martin will speak on future developments and what various Canada funding programs can do for your marketing program. Martin maintains that Canada's food sector has changed completely in the past decade and, will be unrecognizable 10 years from now.

The February program will also feature Lowell Catlett, who will address the future of food and production in the North American scene. Catlett is a Regent's Professor at New Mexico State University and author of many books and articles. He works nationally and internationally with corporations and organizations doing futuristic planning concerning the impacts of technology on careers, lifestyles and the economy.

The ***March 13*** sessions will explore opportunities for building alliances. Speakers from the grains and oilseeds sector will use practical applications to demonstrate actual techniques. Participants will be given an overview of how new generation co-ops work; how farm processing and marketing works in Montana; how Alberta Food Processors can help you develop a product; and, how to get help when you want to export. The evening speaker will address Food Traceability Systems.

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"The Lethbridge Community College cooking school believes that farmers are in the business of turning 'sunshine into food'," says Warren. "As a special feature, the Lethbridge Community College cooking school and its gold medal team will share in the luncheon and supper by preparing delightful and some unusual Alberta foods: another reason why producers won't want to miss this conference and what it offers to their industry future."

Registration costs are $90.95 ($85 plus GST) per individual, per day, or $160.50 ($150 GST) for a farm or corporate unit of four or less persons, per day. Student rates are also available. To register for one or both of the remaining sessions, call 1-800-572-0103 toll free and ask for extension #3323. Registration can be paid by VISA, Mastercard or cheques made payable to Lethbridge Community College. Payment should be sent to Lethbridge Community College, 300 College Drive South, Lethbridge, AB T1K 1L6.

Sessions on February 13 and March 13 start at mid-day. Registration is limited and may fill quickly, so early registration is recommended for the remaining two sessions. An agenda and additional information are available by visiting the Tiffin Conference web site at <www.tiffinconference.ca>.

The Tiffin conference series is made possible by the Ronald Tiffin Endowment fund. Ronald Tiffin was a successful farmer in southern Alberta who felt that he had gained much from extension courses. He left a considerable bequest to enable other farmers and ranchers to benefit as he did. Each year, program specifics are planned by partners from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge Community College, the county of Lethbridge, AVAC, Alberta Treasury Branch financial and Alberta Beef Producers Association.

For further information, contact Vince Ellert, Lethbridge Community College, (403) 320-3407, weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Contact: Jan Warren
(403) 381-5844

Is Mexico in your marketing plan?

If you've ever thought of exporting agricultural products or if exporting to Mexico has been contemplated, Alberta Economic Development (AED) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (Ag-Canada) invites you or representatives from your company to a seminar being held in Calgary on January 29, 2003.

"In 2001, Canada exported close to a billion dollars of agri-food products to Mexico with a 7.09 per cent market share. Mexico is now Alberta's third largest export market or nearly 7.0 per cent of Alberta's export market," says Marcia O'Connor, Trade Director for Mexico-Latin America with AED, Edmonton. "Beef (nearly $219 million) accounted for 53 per cent of Alberta's exports to Mexico, followed by canola seed (21%) and wheat (19%). Alberta's exports into the Mexican market have grown considerably since NAFTA went into effect and since 1999 have shown rapid growth. Many Alberta producers expect export documentation will not be any more difficult than exporting to the U.S., only to find out there are big differences in the two markets. Bringing in key players from the Mexican market makes this seminar an excellent opportunity for Alberta companies to meet with potential buyers and key contacts from Mexico."

Speakers and presenters at the seminar include:

- **Kim O'Neil**, Commercial Officer, Canadian Embassy in Mexico City – she has been in the position of First Secretary for the Agriculture Section since August 1999.
- **Luis Perez**, Border Clearance Representative – was appointed as a Border Clearance Representative under a federal-provincial pilot program in September 2001. He is located at the U.S.-Mexico border crossing at Laredo/Nuevo Laredo, to provide on site assistance for Canadian exporters. In his position, he is able to maintain a close working relationships with key brokers, freight forwarders, shippers and Mexican officials in decision-making positions at the major points of entry.
- **A representative from Centennial** (Grupo Mexatar, Casa Saba suc. Milenio) – Centennial is a national distributor and the largest distributor of consumer items in Mexico. They service over 2,000 consumer stores, operate over 1,100 trailer trucks and own and operate 19 warehouses with over 108,000 square metres capacity with 19 chilled rooms. Their product line includes: processed foods, confectionary, pet food, electronics and consumer items.
- **A representative from Comercial Mexicana** (to be confirmed) – Comerical Mexicana is Mexico's second largest food retailer and operates (2001):
  - 76 Comercial Mexicana stores
  - 21 Mega Comercial Mexicana hypermarkets
  - 35 Comercial Mexicana warehouse stores
  - 18 Sumesa stores
  - 20 Costco stores
  - 49 restaurants (Restaurantes California)

Although it has stores in most major cities, the bulk of its stores are in central Mexico.

A **Freight Forwarder** (Esquivel's Forwarding Agency) from Mexico, and an **Importer/Broker** (Dogale) from Mexico, round out the very informative agenda. As well as listening to the various presentations, in the afternoon, there will be an opportunity for participants and companies to meet in small groups with the speakers.

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Registration cost to attend the seminar is $50 per person (plus GST). For more information, please contact:

- Ray Darwent, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (780) 495-5528
- Marcia O'Connor, Alberta Economic Development (780) 422-1762
- Wendy Hindle, Food Beverage Canada (780) 486-9679

On line registration forms are a

Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/marketnews/mexico/registration_form.pdf>.

Contact: Marcia O'Connor
(780) 422-1762

Agri-News Briefs

Canada's food guide a rainbow of choices

The ***Canada Food Guide*** looks like a rainbow, and each of the four colors represents a food group – yellow for grain products, green for vegetables and fruits, blue for milk and dairy products and red for meat and alternatives. The guide makes it easy to make lower-fat selections from each category every day. Health Canada has set some dietary standards depending on age, body size, activity level and whether you're male or female to ensure that you meet the daily nutrient intake requirements. For instance, moderately active women 25 to 49 years old need about 1,900 calories comprised of 51 g protein, 261 g carbohydrate, 25 to 35 g fibre and not more than 63 g total fat (21 g saturated fat). Men in the same age group require about 2,700 calories, consisting of 64 g protein, 371 g carbohydrate, 25 to 35 g fibre and not more than 90 g total fat (30 g saturated fat). Teenagers 13 to 18 need between 2,100 to 3,200 calories, and these calories should contain 46 to 58 g protein (males at the higher end of the range and females at the lower end), an adequate fat intake to maintain growth and development and carbohydrate intake of 50 to 60 per cent of energy. The Guide suggests a daily intake of five to 12 grain products, five to 10 vegetables and fruit, two to four milk products, and two to three meat and alternatives. ***Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*** has five key components:

- enjoy a variety of foods from each food group every day
- achieve and maintain a healthy body weight by enjoying physical activity and healthy eating habits
- emphasize cereals, breads, other grain products, vegetables and fruits
- choose lower fat dairy products, lean meats and foods prepared with little or no fat
- limit salt, alcohol and caffeine

Instead of finding a pot of gold at the end of this rainbow, you'll feel better and have more energy if you follow the bands of colour in ***Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating***. A copy of the guide can be found on-line at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/onpp-bppn/food_guide_rainbow_e.html>.

Fish farming

Raising Fish in Your Pond or Dugout is a course for anyone interested in raising fish for recreational purposes. It provides an overview of requirements when raising fish, including selecting and constructing a fishpond, licensing, purchasing fish and supplies, feeding, water quality, aeration and disease, predator and weed control. As well as classroom instruction, participants will have an opportunity to view various fish culture and aeration equipment, and speak with industry representatives, such as fingerling suppliers, licensing inspectors and staff from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's aquaculture section. The course is being held in six locations throughout the province during February and May of 2003. All sessions begin at 6:30 p.m.:

• Stony Plain	February 11	(780) 968-3510
• Leduc	February 12	(780) 986-4100
• Airdrie	February 18	(430) 948-8538
• Red Deer	February 19	(430) 350-2163
• Grande Prairie	May 13	(780) 538-5287
• High Prairie	May 14	(780) 523-5955

Cost of the course is $25 per person (includes GST and a course manual). Seating is limited. Any courses having fewer than 10 paid pre-registrants will be cancelled. For further information, contact Eric Hutchings, Alberta Agriculture, Lethbridge, (403) 381-5574.

Agri-News

January 27, 2003

Joe Selinger receives Distinguished Service Award

It was with great pride that the Horse Industry Association of Alberta presented the fourth ***Distinguished Service Award*** to Joe Selinger. This prestigious honour was awarded in recognition of his lasting influence on and impressive contributions to the equine industry in Alberta.

"Since arriving in Canada in 1957, Selinger has been actively involved in the horse industry," says Les Burwash, horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, and member of the Horse Breeders and Owners Conference organizing committee, Airdrie. "Over the years, and in spite of some difficult setbacks, he very successfully turned his dreams and visions into reality. He has made horses, horse improvement and horsemanship training, especially helping young Albertans, his life's work.

One of earliest accomplishments was flying the first imported Hanoverian, a stallion named "Weimar", to Canada from Europe, a feat that in 1960 had never been attempted before. Over the years, Selinger imported additional Hanoverians and was instrumental in the development of the warmblood and sport horse industry in this province.

He has worked with energetic dedication teaching and developing training programs for over 45 years. In 1962 he established the largest Pony Club in Canada. It was through Selinger that several of today's key leaders in Alberta's equine businesses and competitions were first introduced to horses. He always made sure that the young people who came to his facility safely learned the multitude of skills necessary to enjoy and excel at their chosen discipline. His emphasis on fun meant that many young Albertans continued their involvement with horses throughout their lifetime.

Selinger played an integral part in the development of the formal assessment criteria for improving the performance horse. He was honored by the industry many times, including being inducted to the Spruce Meadows Hall of Fame in 1975 and receiving a ***Horseman of the Year*** award from the Alberta Light Horse Association in 1977. Joe Selinger is an amazing horseman, teacher, businessman and most of all a friend to Alberta's equine enthusiasts.

Each year, at the Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners conference, the ***Distinguished Service Award*** is presented to an Albertan or group of Albertans for their contribution to enhance the horse industry. For further information about this award, and for information on how to nominate a candidate for the ***2004 Distinguished Service Award***, contact Les Burwash, horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie.

Contact: Les Burwash
(403) 948-8538

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Grasshopper control program deadline is January 31

Alberta farmers who have not yet sent in their 2002 Grasshopper Control Program applications have only a few days remaining to do so!

Last year was one of the worst years on record for grasshopper infestations in many parts of the province. The provincial government responded with a grasshopper control program designed to compensate bona fide Alberta producers for grasshopper control at the rate of $4 per treatment per acre. Control methods include the use of registered products and acceptable cultural and biological controls.

"To be eligible under this program, invoices for product must be dated between November 1, 2001 and November 1, 2002," says John Knapp, director with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "As well as the time criteria for invoice dates, the work must have been completed between May 15 and September 30, 2002."

Alberta farmers have responded well to this program. Alberta Agriculture has received over 2000 applications for assistance under the program already, and more are expected in the next few days.

"About $5.3 million has been sent out to Alberta farmers to date and it is expected that another $2 million will be sent out over the next few weeks," adds Knapp. "To be eligible for assistance under this program, applications must be postmarked or fax-timed not later than midnight January 31, 2003."

The January 31 deadline is firm, says Knapp. "Alberta farmers who haven't applied yet, have only a few days to get their applications filled out and sent in. Don't forget, the deadline is Friday, January 31, 2003."

For the 2003 crop season, grasshopper scientists are forecasting another outbreak, likely as severe as 2002. Alberta Agriculture will be monitoring the situation throughout the year.

"Spring is the critical time because that's when grasshoppers hatch," says Knapp. "If Alberta gets some very cold, wet weather during hatching, when the young grasshoppers are quite fragile, it could turn the situation around. There have been many situations in the past, when a potentially bad infestation was expected but suddenly disappeared because the weather cooperated."

Contact: John Knapp
(780) 415-9755

New manual helps maximize canola grower profitability

The Canola Council of Canada has updated its ***Canola Growers Manual***, replacing the old version that served canola growers for the last 15 years.

"The new version was written by Canadian canola production and marketing experts," says JoAnne Buth, vice president of crop production, Canola Council. "The three-ring binder manual contains 14 chapters detailing the latest findings on every aspect of the crop, and uses research results from public and Canola Council Production Centre trials."

The manual contains information on:

- effective soil preparation methods
- methods for ideal seed placement
- what's important and new in soil fertility
- how to better identify the various pests of canola
- the latest techniques for harvest management
- safely storing canola
- recent recommendations on marketing the crop.

"As well, the pests section has been completely revised," says Buth. "It contains more details on identifying canola pests, including new full-colour images of insects, weeds and diseases to better help with pest management."

Phil Thomas, former oilseed specialist with Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, wrote the manual with assistance from current Alberta Agriculture oilseed specialist Murray Hartman. Top researchers in various disciplines then reviewed the manual. "The net result is a publication that is the ultimate reference for maximizing canola profitability," says Buth.

The manual is available by calling (204) 982-2100, by using the order form available from provincial grower associations and the council, or on-line at: <https://www.canola-council.org/pubs/pubsform.htm>

Additional information on the Canola Council is also available from the council's web site at <www.canola-council.org>. The council can be contacted by writing to the Canola Council of Canada, 400 - 167 Lombard Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0T6, by phone at (204) 982-2100, fax at (204) 942-1841, or e-mail at <admin@canola-council.org>.

Contact: JoAnne Buth *Murray Hartman*
(204) 982-2110 *(403) 782-8024*

Time to make some shelterbelts plans

Quieter winter months are a great time to give some thought to shelterbelt planting. Shelterbelts provide a number of benefits to the land in close proximity where planted. Taking a little time to scout the lay of the land and know the wind patterns can help when deciding where and what to plant.

As snow falls and drifts occur, it's easy to get an idea of where trees could make a big difference. Windbreaks, created by shelterbelt trees, reduce wind speed by forcing air currents up and over the windbreak, leaving areas of relative calm on the protected side. Windbreaks also act as snow catchers and improve spring moisture conditions.

Recommended trees for field shelterbelt planting are poplars, willows, caragana, lilacs and spruce. Field shelterbelts must be continuous, gaps in a windbreak cause accelerated weather damage in gap areas. For hedge plants, willows are recommended for good soil sites and caragana for dry sites. Hedge plants can be planted in with poplars and this can result in a protected area that is 20 times the height of the barrier.

When it comes to spacing tree, shrub or hedge seedlings in a row, the recommended spacing is: poplar 2.5 m (8 ft.); willow 2.0 m (6 ft.); caragana 30 to 60 cm (1 to 2 ft.); and, lilac 90 to 120 cm (3 to 4 ft.).

Shelterbelts designed to protect dugouts, can trap large amounts of snow. This trapped snow increases spring runoff and the quantity of water available to fill the dugout. Dugout shelterbelts also improve water quality by decreasing wind velocity and filtering out soil, trash and other contaminants.

The tree rows for dugout shelterbelts should be designed so that snow collection is greatest and runoff water can be directed to the dugout. In Alberta, with the northwesterly prevailing winds, it is best to plant trees on the north and west sides of dugouts. Shelterbelts on the south side of a dugout can also work as a very effective snow trap.

For dugout shelterbelts, recommended species are caragana, chokecherry, buffaloberry, sea-buckthorn, willow, Scots pine, Colorado spruce and white spruce.

The deadline for ordering trees under the shelterbelt program is March 15, 2003.

PFRA also offers assistance through the Shelterbelt Enhancement Program (SEP). SEP is a $4-million, five-year initiative designed to reduce greenhouse gases through increased shelterbelt plantings on agricultural lands across the Prairies.

This program will help improve shelterbelt planting success and reduce costs to landowners. As part of the program, clients are supplied with weed-controlling materials and specialized mulch application equipment free of charge when they pick up their trees. Mulching new trees in gives them a greater chance to establish and survive.

To be eligible for the SEP, applicants must apply for, and receive, seedlings though the PFRA Shelterbelt Program.

Eligibility criteria under SEP includes:

- bona fide producers of primary agriculture products
- federal and provincial departments for conservation plantings, reclamation or research purposes
- owners of rural holdings greater than 39 acres (15.8 ha)
- rural holdings of 39 acres or less, commercial enterprises, golf courses, resort areas or private holdings in urban areas are NOT eligible.

For further information on shelterbelts, planting and maintenance, contact the local PFRA office, or visit the PFRA web site at < http://www.agr.gc.ca/pfra/shelterbelt.htm >. An Alberta specific application for trees is provided on the web site and is easy to fill out and print off.

Contact: *Alberta Ag-Info Centre*
1-866-882-7677

Donald G. George
Agroforestry Specialist
AAFC/PFRA – Vegreville
(780)632-2919

Avoid wildlife collisions

Collisions with wildlife can occur at any time of the year, but are most likely to occur from September through December, but warmer temperatures and little snow cover means animals are more active than usual and more likely to cross roads.

Although the majority of animal collisions involve deer, collisions with moose and other large animals are on the rise. The following safety tips may help to reduce the frequency or severity of wildlife collision losses:

- Stay alert – especially at dawn and dusk when deer are most active and visibility is poor. Unfortunately, this is during peak commuter traveling times. Be especially wary during the spring and fall, in rural areas and on roads near rivers, wooded corridors, fences and field edges.

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- Reduce your speed, particularly where "deer crossing" signs are posted. These signs often indicate areas of previous accidents. Slower speeds will increase the reaction time should a deer cross your path. Slow down when rounding a curve or reaching the crest of a hill.
- Scan the side of the road, especially the forested areas where wildlife may be standing. Use your lights during overcast days and when possible, use high beams at night to increase visible distance. Watch for the reflection of eyes or the silhouette of an animal. If you spot a deer on the roadside, slow down and switch to low beams to reduce the chance of disorienting the animal.
- Don't rely on deer whistles or other gadgets, the jury is still out when it comes to their reliability. Having one of these devices installed on a vehicle doesn't exempt anyone from having to drive with caution at a reasonable speed.
- If you spot an animal, be prepared for other drivers to brake suddenly.
- Expect an animal standing on the side of the road to cross your path. Slow to a safe speed when approaching wildlife as they may bolt or change direction at the last minute.
- If you see an animal on the roadside, flash your headlights and honk your horn in short bursts to scare the animal away from the road.
- Continue to brake and look for other deer after one has crossed the road. Deer seldom travel alone.
- Brake firmly when you notice a deer in or near your path. Do not swerve. It can confuse the deer as to where to run. It can also cause you to lose control.
- If your vehicle strikes a deer, do not touch the animal. The frightened animal, in an attempt to move could hurt you or itself. The best procedure is to get your vehicle off the road, if possible, and call the police.
- Always wear your seat belt.
- Keep your windshield clean.

Collisions with wildlife are almost always fatal for the animal, cause severe damage to vehicles and, especially in the case of collisions with larger animals, can cause severe injury to drivers and vehicle passengers.

Drive carefully, especially during dusk and dawn hours.

Contact: Dick Ewert
(780) 427-4134

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Agri-News Briefs

Western Canadian Dairy Seminar

Building on 20 Years of Leadership is the theme of the 21st annual Western Canadian Dairy Seminar being held at the Capri Centre, Red Deer on March 11 to 14, 2003. Topics on the agenda include reproductive management, housing and cow comfort, Dairy Farm policy, secrets to success, forage management, managing metabolic disorders and managing for profitability. Over 20 speakers will make presentations during the seminar. Early registration, received by February 7, 2003, is $195 per person. Registration cost after February 7 is $235 per person. Single day registration is also available. For further information, an agenda and registration form, contact Western Canadian Dairy Seminar, Department of Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science, 4-10 Ag/Forestry Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB T6G 2P5. Registration forms may be faxed to (780) 492-5771 or completed on-line by going to the internet address<www.afns.ualberta.ca/hosted/wcds>.

FCC 4-H scholarships

Young 4-H members have until February 28, 2003 to apply for a share of the $14,000 in scholarship awards offered by Farm Credit Canada (FCC). Ten $1,000 scholarships, one in each province, are being awarded to the project plans that best address local hunger or safety issues. The top national proposal will be selected from the provincial winners in May. FCC will provide the national winner with an additional $1,000 and a budget of up to $3,000 to act on the proposal. Over the last 10 years, FCC has awarded $90,000 in scholarships across Canada. Applications forms are available at local FCC offices and on-line at <www.fcc-fac.ca>. Deadline for entries is February 28, 2003 and winners will be announced in April. For further information, contact the local FCC office.

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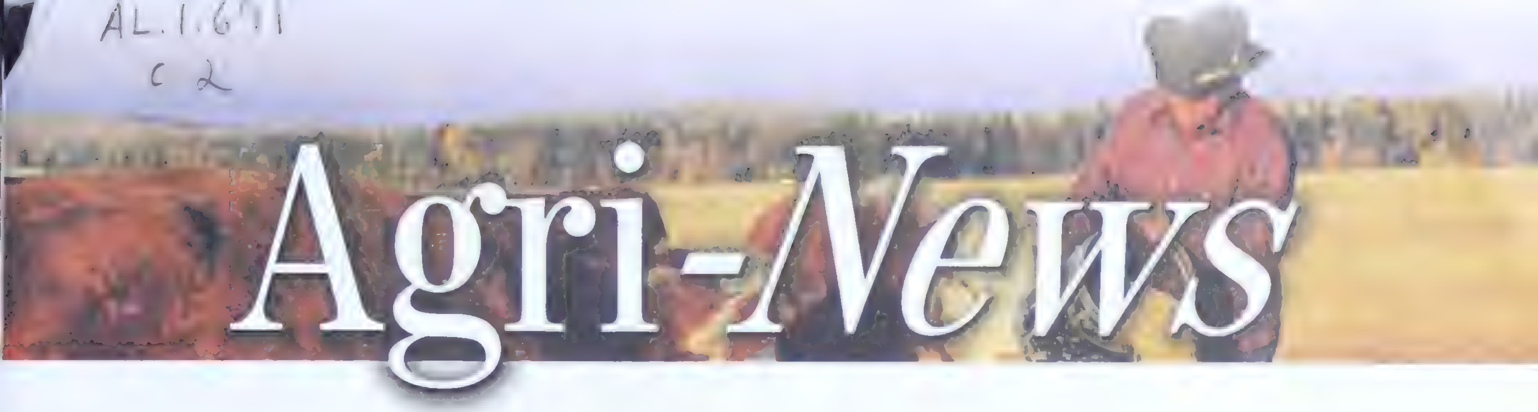

Agri-News

February 3, 2003

Crop insurance changes provide more options and better protection for Alberta's farmers

Sweeping farmer-driven enhancements to Alberta's crop insurance programs will give producers access to the most innovative and comprehensive program in Canada, helping them protect their farming operations against the volatility of weather and commodity prices.

"These significant enhancements to crop insurance mean Alberta producers will have more options and better coverage for production and price risks inherent in the agriculture industry," said Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Strengthening our package of insurance options means we can move away from ad hoc programs when agricultural disasters occur such as the drought of 2002."

The changes, which will be rolled out over the next two crop years by AFSC, formerly Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, will provide farmers with a variety of cost-effective strategies to manage risk in their operations.

Significant changes for the 2003 crop year include:

- **Spring Price Endorsement Insurance** – protects insured Alberta farmers against significant drops in market prices between the time seeding decisions are made and crops are harvested.
- **Revenue Insurance coverage** – sets a floor price to protect farmers from low market prices.
- **Pasture/Forage Insurance** – provides coverage that better reflects the productive capacity of the land by region, expanded coverage for bush pasture and an incentive for continuous participation in the programs.
- **Altering the forage and crop insurance deadlines** – to an earlier sign-up date to improve the financial soundness of the programs. The 2004 deadlines will be December 15, 2003 for forage insurance and March 31, 2004 for crop insurance.

Changes for the 2004 year include altering the forage and crop insurance deadlines to an earlier sign-up date.

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Farmers can call 1-888-786-RISK (1-888-786-7475) for information specific to the crop insurance changes or to find their closest AFSC district office. Information can also be obtained at the AFSC web site, <www.AFSC.ca>.

AFSC provides farmers and agri-businesses with unique financial and risk management tools, including crop and hail insurance, farm loans for beginning and developing farmers, commercial financing for the province's agri-food industries and small businesses in rural and urban centers, as well as farm income disaster relief.

Contact: *Merle Jacobson*
Senior Manager Insurance Operations
AFSC
(403) 782-8229

David Hennig
Communications Branch
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-1177

Over 800 attend the 2003 HBOC

The annual Horse Breeders and Owners Conference (HBOC) just keeps attracting more and more horse enthusiasts each year. From the first conference in 1984 to the 20th HBOC event held in Red Deer on January 10 to 12, 2003, internationally respected speakers have been invited to speak to members of Alberta's horse industry, and this year over 800 people attended the conference.

"From it's inception, the conference has presented the newest information in research, training, breeding, marketing and issues and trends facing the horse industry," says Les Burwash, horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and member of the HBOC organizing committee, Airdrie. "As well as providing a learning opportunity, the conference is a wonderful social event where Albertans involved in the horse industry can meet and network."

Alberta has a reputation for producing excellent performance horses. The industry is certainly on the right track in the province. Education and research have helped breeders set and reach their goals.

The conference, coordinated by the horse industry section of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, receives critical acclaim each year from attendees as well as invited speakers and presenters.

The annual conference is supported by a growing number of sponsors. At the 1984 conference six booths were set up for sponsors. The 2003 conference was proud to boast 51 sponsors and a total of 55 booths at the tradeshow in the Trade Centre at the Capri Centre.

"Sponsors are instrumental in making the conference such a success," says Burwash. "We are very pleased that so many organizations, associations, businesses and suppliers continue their much appreciated involvement with the HBOC."

"The conference organizers would like to extend a special thank you to all of the sponsors and to the staff from Alberta Agriculture who provided a tremendous amount of assistance with the organization and coordination of the conference," says Pete Fraser, Chairman of HBOC, Calgary.

The Horse Owners and Breeders Conference is held each year in January. It is well known as one the premier horse conference in North America. Several speakers are already confirmed for next year's conference scheduled for January 9 to 11, 2004.

Contact: *Les Burwash*
(403) 948-8532

Value chains help increase competitive advantage

Due to the difficulty in creating and maintaining value in an intensely competitive marketplace, many agri-businesses are forming value chains to meet new demands and to help keep their businesses profitable.

"Agri-food value chains can link the demands of the end-consumer to all the groups that precede them in the food chain: marketers, processors, producers, to name just a few," says Derek Parker, leader of the Agriculture and Food Council's value-chain initiative. "The basic characteristic of a value chain is market-focused collaboration. What this means is that different business enterprises work together to respond to the market in a well-connected and coordinated effort focusing on exceeding the expectations of consumers."

For example, says Parker, Prairie Natural Processing, Inc. acts like a chain manager, coordinating a propagator, blackcurrant growers, a processor and a marketing firm. As the group expands their markets, information flows back to the propagator who prepares seedlings to satisfy target demand levels. The product is in tune with a consumer that is focused on healthy and convenient foods. Products can be reformulated to satisfy evolving taste patterns thanks to the support of Alberta Agriculture's Leduc Food Processing Development Centre.

"Essentially, companies in a value chain are connected from one end of the production process, such as the farmer's field or the geneticist's lab, through other steps, such as processing. The chain might even continue through to the final stage where the finished product is sold to the consumer," says Parker. "This might mean giving up some independence, but it also can lead to a new approach to doing business that is more rewarding than the old way."

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Typically, adds Parker, a value-chain is developed to respond to the demands of the marketplace. "You don't put together a value chain and then turn on cruise-control. Every link in the chain must respond to consumer's needs. A well-functioning value chain gives its participants the means to effectively link their production activities to market demands."

Last year, the value chain initiative produced a publication called ***The Value Chain Handbook***. The handbook maps out the typical steps involved in building a value chain as well as the factors that contribute to its success. It also suggests an approach that can be modified to suit any alliance-building scenario.

The new handbook is available on the internet at <http://www.agfoodcouncil.com/serve/chainbook.pdf>.

Printed copies of the handbook may be picked up from:

- Alberta Agriculture's Stony Plain hub office, 4709 - 44 Avenue, Stony Plain, T7Z 1N4
- Alberta Agriculture's Airdrie hub office, 909 Irricana Road, N.E., Airdrie, T4A 2G6
- Alberta Agriculture's Agri-Processing Branch, #304, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, T6H 5T6
- Agriculture and Food Council, #402, 1101-5 Street, Nisku, Alberta, T9E 7N3

Contact: Derek Parker
(780) 422-5577

Rural tourism grows with memorable experiences

"I want to set afire people's imaginations in creating innovative experiences in rural settings, not just tours . . ." As a guest facilitator, Celes Davar's enthusiasm captures the spirit the conference theme, ***Creating the Experience***, at the 3rd annual ***Growing Rural Tourism Conference***, hosted by Camrose Regional Exhibition in Camrose, February 10 to 12, 2003.

"Assembling the strengths of communities in developing and attracting potential tourism markets is the focus of this year's conference," says Sharon Stollery, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag Tourism Initiative, Stony Plain. "Creating the Experience promises to build on momentum of the success of last year's event by offering even more practical hands-on tools for putting ideas into action."

Davar, keynote facilitator, is a specialist in developing rural tourism partnerships and owner/operator of Earth Rhythms, near Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba. He believes, "Rural communities are incredible places where history, culture, heritage and nature exist. We are not using these resources and the skills and knowledge of the people who live there as much as we could be." As community partners, Davar believes we can use these intrinsic strengths and savvy, to partner, create memorable experiences and market to the tourism global market place.

"A growing number of people are seeking authentic, not contrived, recreation experiences," says Trent Schumann, conference co-facilitator and successful owner/operator of Mountain Quest. "They want meaningful contact with people in other lifestyles, not just another mainstream tourist destination. Urban people are attracted to anything rural, the off-beat and interesting, not connected with their own lives. As an example, visiting a working ranch is appealing to many people who want to see and experience, to eat food indigenous to the area, to feel involved and special, to experience an authentic way of life."

Bill Reynolds, with Alberta Agriculture's Ag Tourism Initiative and chairperson of the ***Growing Rural Tourism*** conference program committee, says the objective is to match products to markets to create an experience. "The goal is to identify resources, tools and skills to attract tourism dollars. In simulating the theme, *Creating the Experience*, we will create an inviting learning environment for participants, immersing people in activities, offering interactive sessions with resource people, entertainment and giving them a memorable experience they can take home."

Community representatives can be the catalysts within their own communities, tapping the existing incredible resources unique to their locale, tailoring and marketing these particular lifestyle ingredients into memorable tourism experiences.

At the conference, there will be a Resource Fair where resource people will offer technical expertise, potential networks, finance sources and global market information. The City of Camrose will be showcased, and a Mystery Tour will intrigue, inform and entertain conference participants. The keynote facilitators, will be available throughout the conference for sharing expertise. "Community partners will be inspired to gain the skills and tools, returning to their communities and creating their own unique rural tourism experiences that are rich and compelling," adds Reynolds.

The ***Growing Rural Tourism*** conference is a forum to facilitate the growth of marketable rural tourism attractions in Alberta, in partnership with Camrose Regional Exhibition, Alberta Economic Development, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Travel Alberta. For more information, contact Shirley Danberger, the conference coordinator, at 1-800-296-8112 or view and download the conference program and registration form from the conference web site at <http://www.tourismtogether.com/>.

Contact: Sharon Stollery
(780) 968-3514

FCC and St. John Ambulance deliver First Aid on the Farm

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) is partnering with Alberta 4-H and St. John Ambulance to deliver ***First Aid on the Farm*** – a program aimed at teaching young people lifesaving skills.

FCC launched ***First Aid on the Farm*** in 2001 as part of its commitment to farm safety awareness. Training was provided to more than 2,100 students at 82 schools across Canada last year. This year, the course will be provided to another 1,500 students in Canada.

"The program gives young people the chance to learn first aid for common farm-related injuries, skills that are important to increase safety on the family farm," says Larry Martina, FCC area vice-president for Alberta and B.C.

In Alberta, the partners have agreed to offer training to 4-H members who are in grade eight. Currently, there are 14 courses tentatively scheduled in communities across Alberta with more to come.

"The Alberta 4-H Program is thrilled to be part of this initiative. ***First Aid on the Farm*** is another way to foster leadership skills in our youth," says Bruce Banks, executive director of the 4-H Foundation of Alberta.

St. John Ambulance instructors will provide students with a one-day course on basic first aid skills such as controlling severe bleeding, performing the abdominal thrust maneuver and giving artificial respiration. When training is complete, students will be asked to perform a farm safety audit with their parents. This audit will help farm families identify potential hazards to make their home and farm a safer environment.

Upon successful completion of the course, students receive their ***First Aid on the Farm*** certification. Students enrolled in the training will become first aid ambassadors for their school.

Studies conducted by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program show that 67 per cent of fatalities and 62 per cent of hospitalizations of farm children are the result of agricultural machinery incidents. St. John Ambulance research suggests that first aid training can significantly reduce the incidence of injuries.

"Through this partnership with Farm Credit Canada, we are significantly expanding our reach to rural areas," says Jim McCallion, chief executive officer for St. John Ambulance National Headquarters. "Together, we are helping students take preventive measures to make their farms safer and equipping them to respond in an emergency."

St. John Ambulance is a charitable, not-for-profit organization that has been providing training and community service to Canadians since 1883. Every year, St. John Ambulance teaches first aid, CPR and health promotion to more than 500,000 Canadians and provides millions of hours of voluntary community service.

4-H is Canada's longest-running, rural-based youth development program. Through project work, members develop life skills, including citizenship, leadership, co-operation, responsibility and independence.

FCC helps farmers and agribusiness operators grow, diversify and prosper. Operating from 100 offices located in rural Canada, the corporation's 900 employees are passionate about the business of agriculture.

Contact: *Clem Samson*
Farm Credit Canada
(403) 382-3073
Cell phone: (403) 308-1151

Bruce Banks
4-H Foundation of Alberta
(780) 682-2153
foundation@4hab.com

Alberta 4-H Leaders stampede to the 2003 conference

Over 300 Alberta 4-H volunteer leaders and guests from across Canada and Montana gathered for the 61st annual Alberta 4-H Leaders' Conference from January 17 to 19, 2003. Hosted by the Calgary 4-H Region, this year's conference theme was ***Stampeding to the 2003 Alberta 4-H Leaders' Conference***.

"There were sessions for every 4-H leader, new or experienced," says Henry Wiegman, provincial 4-H agriculture specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and conference coordinator, Edmonton. "The conference is an opportunity for leaders from different project areas and all regions of the province to learn from each other and share their successes."

A highlight of the weekend included the induction of Edward & Stella Pimm of Berwyn Alberta into the 4-H Hall of Fame. The Pimms have made 4-H a family affair and have been involved in the 4-H program at all levels of the 4-H organization. The 2003 conference also included the presentation of the inaugural Golden Clover Award to the Calgary Regional 4-H Alumni. This award recognizes individuals or groups who have exhibited outstanding initiative and leadership to contribute an innovative idea, program or event that has made a significant difference to Alberta 4-H.

Cont'd on page 5

Major conference sponsors include Agricore United, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Alberta Treasury Branches and AMA Farm Insurance. The partnership of government, industry and 4-H members and leaders enables Alberta 4-H to flourish and facilitates training functions such as this conference. Over 60 4-H sponsors were recognized at the sponsor banquet.

The Alberta 4-H Leaders' Conference is open to all registered 4-H leaders, key leaders, and council members in Alberta. For more information on this program, contact Wiegman at (780) 422-4444.

Contact: *Henry Wiegman*
(780) 422-4H4H
henry.wiegman@gov.ab.ca

Agri-News Briefs

2003 Publications List

Over 500 free publications and over 70 priced publications, books, videos and CD ROMs are listed in Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's ***2003 Publications List***. Factsheets and other free publications that deal with crops, horticulture, agro-forestry, animals and aquatic life, soils and water, insects - diseases - pests, agricultural engineering, agricultural economics and organizational development are all itemized by topic and by Agdex number. A second section of the publication includes a complete listing of Alberta Agriculture's priced publications, videos and CD ROMs, including titles such as the ***Alberta Forage Manual***, ***Crop Protection 2003***, ***Weed Seedling Guide***, ***Beekeeping in Western Canada***, the four-part video ***Horse Training***, ***Insect Identification Program CD ROM*** and ***Weeds Identification Program CD ROM***. The ***2003 Publications List*** is available free of charge by calling the Publications Office toll free in Alberta at 1-800-292-5697 or e-mailing <publications.office@gov.ab.ca>.

Growing kids, shrinking bones: tomorrow's challenge

Bone health and obesity are the two key issues for children that will be addressed and discussed at the 2003 Nutrition File Seminars being held at the Delta Edmonton South in Edmonton on February 12, 2003 and at the Radisson Hotel Calgary Airport in Calgary on February 13, 2003. Alberta Milk, the sponsor organization, encourages dietitians, community and occupational health nurses, fitness professionals, home economists, pediatricians and family physicians and other health professionals to attend this informative one-day seminar. Nicole Angelique Kerr, RD, MPH, a health communications specialist in the Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity at the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia will present practical knowledge about what can be done to promote bone health among young girls and the prevention of obesity in children. Space is limited, so early registration is advised. Seminar registration fees are $40 for health professionals, $35 for Dietitians of Canada members and $10 for full-time students. For further information or to register, contact Alberta Milk, (780) 453-5902, ext #315 in Edmonton, 1-800-252-7530, ext 315 toll free in Alberta, or e-mail <daugustyn@albertamilk.com>.

"Think Large"

A new communications program, ***Think Large*** has been launched by the Western Canadian Association of Bovine Practitioners (WCABP) to attract students to careers as large animal veterinarians. The WCABP has chosen a fun, light-hearted way to illustrate the potential for real growth and satisfaction in large animal veterinary practice. The program is designed to appeal to high school students and early college students and features a number of resources. The role of large animal veterinarians is an increasingly dynamic one. Today's large animal vets focus on health management and disease prevention, working directly with producers and operation managers to design innovative herd health plans and improve productivity. The program stresses the leading-edge aspects of this career choice, demonstrating how veterinarians are on the front lines of biosecurity, food safety and food quality. Another key benefit in this career choice is the opportunity to work in a rural environment with long-term opportunities. More information on the ***Think Large*** program and on the opportunities afforded by a career in veterinary medicine is available by contacting the WCABP toll free at (866) COW-VETS (269-8387), faxing (403) 244-2340 or e-mailing <wcapb@incentre.net>. Information is also available on the WCABP web site at <www.cattle.ca/wcabp/>.

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Agri-News

February 10, 2003

Is there a future in organic/pasture pig production?

The evolution of the pig industry in the last decade has gone from big barns to huge barns. In light of this it may seem unusual for some producers to be considering organic/pasture pig production. As far as technology is concerned, this could appear a step backwards.

"Organic/pasture pig production is a simple system where the pig can be on pasture as much as is practically possible," says Mike Dolinski, organic specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "When buildings are used, they need to have bedding and the pigs need to be given a lot of room to move around. Should the pigs get sick, it is a signal that something is wrong with the environment, feed or management. With an organic system, producers don't solve the disease problems by giving antibiotics. They don't just treat the symptoms, but find the cause and treat that."

Some of the principals that organic/pasture pig production is often based on include:

- no antibiotics
- raised according to humane standards
- 100% vegetarian feed – no animal by-products
- no organo phosphate or organo chlorine pesticides used
- produced without waste lagoons
- no growth promotants
- environmentally responsible
- bedding is used during all phases of production
- natural rooting habits of hogs are allowed to be expressed

"With consumers being increasingly concerned about how animals are raised, there is certainly a place for organic pig production," says Dolinski. "In Alberta, the organic/pasture pig industry is very small, but many think there is potential to develop this industry."

There are three seminars on topics related to organic/pasture, low cost pork production being held in Alberta.

All seminars start at 10:00 a.m., registration is at 9:30 a.m.

Wainright	February 20	Wainright Provincial Building
Fairview	February 27	Fairview Provincial Building
Lethbridge	March 6	Lethbridge Community College Instructional Building, Room #IB1104

For more information, phone Bert Dening at (780) 674-8247 or e-mail <bert.dening@gov.ab.ca>.

Contact: *Mike Dolinski* *(780) 422-4873*
Bert Dening *(780) 674-8247*

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Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@gov.ab.ca

Cereal and oilseed crop varieties for 2003

A newly revised Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development factsheet aims to help producers choose crop varieties that are best suited to their farming operations. Choosing the best crop variety for the 2003 growing season may be especially challenging following the drought experience over most of the province in 2002.

Varieties of Cereal and Oilseed Crops for Alberta – 2003 (Agdex FS100/32) contains information about individual varieties and how they have performed in six different production areas in Alberta. These areas are based primarily on precipitation and length of growing season. The publication includes a map showing where these areas are located within the province.

The factsheet looks at various agronomic characteristics for varieties of wheat, oats, barley, flax, canola, triticale and rye. These include relative yield, comparative maturity and resistance to disease. Combined with the map, these characteristics can help farmers choose varieties that are best suited to their own particular farming situation.

Free copies of ***Varieties of Cereal and Oilseed Crops – 2003*** are available at Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll-free in Alberta at 1-800-292-5697 and (780) 427-0391 in the Edmonton area. The publication is also available from Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/100/0003200.html>.

Alberta Agriculture has hundreds of factsheets and publications available at the Agriculture Publications Office in Edmonton. Information included in these publications covers a wide range of topics; crops, horticulture, soils and water, livestock, aquatic life, insect and disease pests, agricultural engineering and agricultural economics. Call toll free 1-800-292-5697 for a free catalogue.

Contact: *Publications Office*
1-800-292-5697

Office of the Farmers' Advocate more than just a mediator

When farmers need help, their first stop is often the Office of the Farmers' Advocate of Alberta.

"The farmers' advocate is a person with an agricultural background and with farming experience who is appointed by the Alberta government to deal with the problems and concerns of farmers," says Dean Lien, Farmers' Advocate of Alberta, Edmonton. "The main job of my office is to help resolve disputes involving a farmer or rancher who believes an injustice has been done through the actions of a third party.

"What we need before getting involved in a dispute is a letter asking for our help as well as the full particulars of the problem, including copies of all documentation." But, while the results of past mediation have been very encouraging, he explains, there are limitations. "We can't take legal action in a dispute; however, after careful investigation, we may advise a client to seek legal consul."

Lien says that if the complaint is about any of the three levels of government, the farmers' advocate will consult with the party so named and try to settle the concern. In some cases involving provincial matters, the complaint may be referred to the provincial ombudsmen.

However, Lien says he and his assistants have other responsibilities besides dispute resolution. "We're available for public meetings on subjects such as surface rights, mineral leasing, seismic activity, trespass and other topics that may be of concern to the agricultural community." As well, the office performs a number of different functions under various provincial acts and programs, including:

- Acting as secretary to the Farm Implement Board under the *Farm Implement Act*, and advising the minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development on matters related to agricultural equipment. The board resolves concerns dealing with warranty, dealer/distributor termination, part sourcing and other aspects of the act. The Office of the Farmers' Advocate also processes dealer and distributor licenses.
- Ensuring dealership agreements on purchased farm equipment are honoured under the *Farm Implement Dealerships Act*.
- Mediating nuisance complaints under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*. The farmers' advocate administers the practice review committees that are established under the act. The Natural Resource Conservation Board or the minister of Alberta Agriculture may refer a complaint against an agricultural operation to one of these committees.
- Administrating the water well restoration or replacement program. A landowner can apply under this program if he feels his water well has been damaged by seismic or oil and gas activity.
- Acting as a member of the Landowner Relations Committee. This group consists of landowners and individuals from the energy industry and agriculture interest groups. They meet to share information about energy development and how it affects rural landowners in Alberta.
- Participating as a team member with representatives from Alberta Environment, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board, and Sustainable Resource Development on proposals regarding policy changes for the reclamation and remediation of wells, pipelines and battery sites.

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- Helping revamp the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board's *Guide 50* that deals with drilling waste disposal.
- Bringing a rural perspective to such groups as the Alberta Pipeline Environment Steering Committee, the Joint Government/Industry Geophysical Committee and the Land Agent Advisory Committee.

The Office of the Farmers' Advocate is also a founding member of the rural crime watch association. "The farmers' advocate is a member of the provincial steering committee," says Lien. "I also make public appearances at local rural crime watch meetings to help support the program. My office has a display booth and videotapes that are available for use by community groups and rural crime watch associations.

"The Office of the Farmers' Advocate is unique to government that it doesn't act under legislative authority. Instead, it reports directly to the minister of Agriculture. Part of the success of the office is its ability to cross jurisdictional lines to meet with politicians at all levels, as well as with CEOs of financial institutions and insurance, energy and utility companies, in order to advance the position of rural Albertans."

Additional information on the Office of the Farmers' Advocate of Alberta is available on their webpage at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/agencies/farmersadvocate/>.

Contact: Office of the Farmers' Advocate of Alberta
305, 7000 - 113 Street
Edmonton AB T6H 5T6
(780) 427-2433
Fax (780) 427-3913

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton.

Changing tastes and habits – trends or fads

There's no denying that Albertan's tastes in foods have changed significantly in the last decade. But the changes aren't confined to what we like to eat, they also involve when we like to eat and how we like to prepare our food. Meal times and meal preparation habits are changing as rapidly as 'what' is on the menu in Alberta homes and restaurants.

"Albertans are demanding more variety in their menu choices, and the profusion of spices, ethnic varieties and ingredient choices are making it easier to satisfy these taste changes," says Janice McGregor, feasibility specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Stony Plain. "The most significant trend may be that many Albertan families focus on convenient foods during the week and cook from scratch on weekends, when time permits. Where families used to eat out most often on the weekends, there is now a developing trend to eat more prepared meals or eat out during the week and make meals a family treat on the weekends."

Being aware of these trends can help producers and processors understand the consumers and have a better idea of the needs of their customers.

So what food and ingredient trends are on the rise among Albertan consumers?

- **Regional cuisine** – an increase in the number of growers, who are customizing their products to suit local consumers and chefs. Chefs are getting more bang for the buck by sourcing flavorful, better quality ingredients
- **Slow Food** – cooking with local produce, in season, organically grown, small quantities, using traditional or ethnic recipes
- **Return to comfort food** – a continuing love of stews, meatloafs, macaroni and cheese, often with a gourmet twist
- **Fruits and vegetables** – new and interesting veggies and fruits are one of the adventurous changes in Alberta menus. Health concerns and availability have helped to add more fruits and vegetables onto the shopping list
- **Exotic flavours** – the many varieties of rice, noodles, pastas, pastes and oils make adding a little ethnic flare easy
- **Herbs and spices** – fresh herbs are much more readily available and Albertans are finding experimentation with herbs and spices an exciting way to add zest to their meals
- **Grains, breads and beans** – nutritious, tasty and wholesome, the numerous choices of grains – bulgar, millet, flax, whole-grain; pulse, legumes and beans – peas, lentils, pinto beans, chick peas, fava, lima, soybeans; and breads that include seeds, dried fruit or herbs, make the inclusion of these healthy carbohydrate choices an adventure in itself
- **Hot sauces and dips** – all sorts of ethnic condiments, chutneys, salsas, chili and curry, that add some zip to a dish, are finding their way into more and more Alberta homes. Some like it hot, and some like it hotter!
- **Fish and seafood** – the availability of fresh fish and seafood has resulted in higher demand for these products. Whether flown in from the coasts or locally farm-raised fare, such as trout, salmon and tilapia, fish is becoming a common main course
- **Beef still rules** – beef entrees and steakhouses remain popular; chefs are making increased use of lesser expensive cuts of meat including short ribs, Lancaster hotpot, oxtail, – all slow cooked dishes requiring chef's creativity to prepare them to perfection

"Purchasing fresh, high-quality, local produce and products is becoming more important to Alberta consumers," says McGregor. "Healthy, local choices are topping the shopping list to a much greater extent."

Contact: Janice McGregor
(780) 968-3353

Record $3.7 million in hail rebates mailed in late January

More than 5,100 Alberta farmers who purchased straight hail crop insurance in 2002 will receive premium rebates totaling a record $3.7 million.

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, said the AFSC (Agricultural Financial Services Corporation) hail rebates will be welcome news for many producers who suffered disastrous growing conditions in 2002.

"If there was one bright spot last year, it's the fact that we lost few crops due to hail," said McClellan.

Farmers who purchased hail insurance and made a claim in 2002 will receive a 15-per-cent premium rebate while farmers who did not make a claim will receive a 30-per-cent premium rebate. Rebate cheques will be mailed directly to producers in late January. Last year, premium rebates were calculated at 10 and 20 per cent respectively.

AFSC straight hail insurance is a self-sustaining farmer-funded program. There are no government contributions to premiums. In 2002, AFSC collected $13 million in hail insurance premiums and paid out losses totaling $10.2 million. When collected premiums are higher than claims paid, AFSC rebates a portion back to farmers.

Hail insurance is available to farmers at any time within the current crop year. The policy comes into effect at 12 noon the day after a farmer applies. The policy expires October 31 of the year of application. Further information on AFSC crop insurance and lending services can be obtained at AFSC district offices or at www.AFSC.ca. AFSC is a provincial crown corporation that provides farmers and agribusinesses with financial services including crop insurance, farm income disaster protection as well as farm and agribusiness loans.

Contact: *Merle Jacobson*
Senior Manager, Insurance Services
AFSC
(403) 782-8229

Agri-News Briefs

Bedding plants production – from seeds to sales

The Greenhouse Resource and Extension Assistance Team (GREAT) in cooperation with the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association (AGGA) has organized a one-day workshop on the production and marketing of quality bedding plants. Bedding plants is the single most important crop produced and retailed through the greenhouses in Alberta. The workshop, being held on February 26, 2003 at the Crop Diversification Centre, 17507 Fort Road, Edmonton, Alberta, will focus on the production and sale of quality bedding plants. Topics include a review of the industry, future trends in the industry, designing good growing media, nutrient and water management, raising quality plugs, diagnosing and managing diseases, insect identification and insect control. The cost of the workshop for the AGGA members is $53.50 and $74.90 for non-members. Registration includes lunch and handouts. Registration information is available at <www.agga.ca>. For further information, contact Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse business development specialist at (780) 415-2303 or e-mail <mohyuddin.mirza@gov.ab.ca>

Wills and succession planning seminars

Hosted by the local Ag Society, the Farm Estate Advisory Group is conducting succession seminars with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Alberta Agricultural Societies in several locations in the province. For the past eight years, seminars on Wills and succession planning have been helping Alberta farmers plan for the future of their farms. The seminars focus on

- minimizing taxes at death, roll-overs and the capital gains exemption
- ensuring the farm stays in tact as a viable operation
- the different options on how to be fair with non-participating children
- having to partner with unwanted siblings, in-laws, or spouses of deceased partners
- ways you can manage the inheritance even after you die
- how to communicate with family/partners so that there is business and family harmony before and after the head of the business slows down, retires or dies, and
- knowing whether or not the lawyers, accountants and advisors are working for your benefit

Location	Date	Time	Place
Airdrie	February 12	1:30 p.m.	Twin Arena
Whitecourt	February 19	7:00 p.m.	Interpretive Centre
Westlock	February 20	6:30 p.m.	Adult Learning Centre
Wembley	February 24	7:00 p.m.	Rec Plex
Smith	February 27	7:00 p.m.	Ag Rec Centre

These succession seminars are designed for medium to large size businesses operated by a family or more than one shareholder or partner. Only five per cent of businesses pass successfully to the next generation, so these succession seminars were designed for people who want to ensure that they efficiently pass (or receive) the business onto the next generation. The cost of the seminar varies, so contact the local Ag Society for admission price and tax receipt. Payment can be made at the door. For general inquiries, contact Richard Baker at (780) 487-5202 or e-mail <rbaker@estateadvisors.org>.

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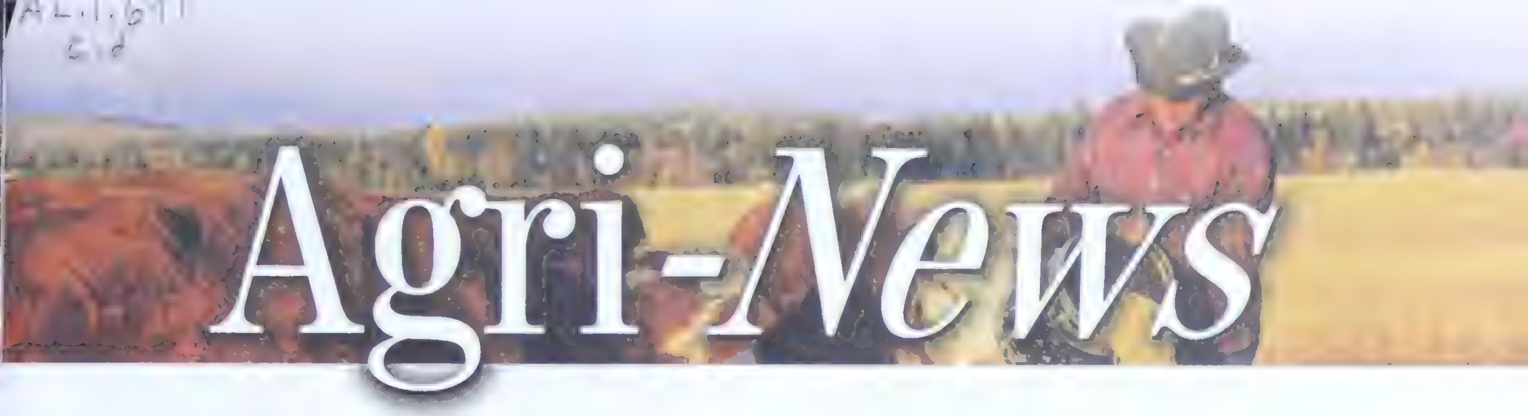

Agri-News

February 17, 2003

Agency detains animal feed products

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is taking action to protect consumers by detaining zinc oxide and livestock feed products that are contaminated with dioxin. A limited number of shipments of zinc oxide from the United States for livestock feed use in Canada have been identified as a source of contamination.

The CFIA took immediate action by detaining affected zinc oxide and livestock feed products identified through traceback procedures, based on information received from U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in late January.

Traceback and detention activities continue, including the removal of targeted livestock feed products containing the affected zinc oxide. Feed mills and targeted livestock producers that have received contaminated product are being identified and contacted with the assistance of the affected companies.

A finding of elevated dioxin levels in random sampling of U.S. catfish initiated the original investigation that traced the contamination to a source of zinc oxide used to manufacture fish feed. Recent international scientific information indicates dioxin is present in the environment at background levels, however, testing for dioxin in Canada to date has not identified any dioxin at elevated levels in the food supply from this particular source of contamination.

The CFIA is targeting its monitoring as a precautionary measure and test results will be shared with Health Canada for a human health risk assessment. The CFIA is working with Health Canada to review the available information and determine whether further action is required.

Contact: *Canadian Food Inspection Agency*
(613) 228-6682

Health Canadam Media Relations
Margot Geduld
(613) 957-1588

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Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@gov.ab.ca

Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Positive effects of grass seed production on the environment

At the Canadian Alfalfa and Grass Seed Conference, Dr. Jeffrey Steiner, research agronomist with the United States Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) in Corvallis, Oregon, gave an informative presentation on the proactive role of perennial grass seed crops on agricultural and environmental sustainability. Over 150 people attended this conference, hosted by the Irrigated Alfalfa Seed Producers of Alberta.

Steiner's teams' research began as a result of legislation put in place to protect natural resources. The agricultural community had to demonstrate the impact of different farming practices on water quality and wildlife habitat. "The provisions of the regulatory legislation specify that the best scientific information available should be used to fulfill legislative policies," explains Henry Najda, P.Ag, grass seed agronomist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "It was determined that the results from a proactive systems approach would help producers choose among the most effective science-based management strategies to effectively maintain environmental quality and achieve the greatest income for local farm conditions."

The actual impacts that perennial grass seed farming had on water quality were not known. The research was planned to determine if there were problems with production practices, and what could be done to remedy any problems that were found. In 1992, the USDA-ARS, National Forage Seed Production Research Center at Corvallis, Oregon, began a systems research program to determine the effects of changing various farming practices such as no-till or conventional establishment, full straw or bale-and-remove management, crop rotation or monoculture, and nitrogen management practices.

"Steiner reported that the results from these various studies demonstrated that conservation farming practices not only protected water quality but also were economical," adds Najda. "An unanticipated positive attribute of grass seed production systems was that low lying seed fields were shown to provide winter habitat for fish and other aquatic wildlife during high stream flow periods. The diversity of aquatic wildlife using some field drainages was remarkable and indicated that grass seed production fields under appropriate management may positively contribute to aquatic habitat quality."

Several other environmental benefits may be positively attributed to grass seed and forage crop production. Perennial grass seed and forage crops may help preserve topsoil and contribute to clean air quality by reducing the need for tillage. By acting as a filter and retarding sediment movement, grass seed and forage crops can protect streams, lakes and groundwater. Grass seed and forage crops absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen that helps in the reduction of greenhouse gases.

The multi-disciplinary team approach led by the USDA-ARS, involved government cooperation at the federal, state and county levels and included crops and soils researchers, stream ecologists, fish and wildlife biologists, agronomy and fisheries state extension agents, entomologists, grass seed producers and industry. Through this team effort, research results are providing a basis for determining specific production practices that will be recognized by the USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service, and others promoting conservation practices that demonstrate compliance with legislated environmental quality regulations.

"Steiner and his team serve as a model for others in the farming and research community in that their team demonstrated that all partners – grass seed producers, industry and public agencies can develop a win-win situation where not only economic production can be maintained and the environment can be not only protected, but benefit from crop production practices," says Najda.

Contact: *Henry Najda, P.Ag*
(403) 362-1346

Explore Direct 2003 energizes farm direct marketers

"Over 220 meat producers, fruit and vegetable growers, processors, craftspeople and farmers' market vendors and managers from across Alberta, and even a few from British Columbia and Ontario attended the ***Explore Direct 2003*** conference," says Marian Williams, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag-Entrepreneurship Division, Camrose.

Practical hints on doing business in a new marketplace were shared during the pre-conference workshop. Farm direct marketers were advised to "create an experience" in their business. Customers are looking for the "WOW factor", and it can be created in a farm retail business by building an experience that includes escapism, education, esthetics and entertainment for the customer. Farm direct businesses were advised to be creative and remember that successful businesses are constantly changing, so don't be afraid to start making changes, but start with a small and manageable number of changes.

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Jim Hole, Hole's Greenhouses, St. Albert, spoke on capitalizing on trends. Some of the trends he identified that are affecting his business include several trends based on what customers want, such as:

- instant gratification – they don't want to wait for plants to grow
- a larger selection of product
- convenience – make the shopping environment as hassle free as possible
- information – have knowledgeable staff
- a trusting relationship with the business

Hole also encouraged the ***Explore Direct*** participants, saying, "If you believe the concept is good and that customers will want it, take a chance and go for it!"

Through the 14 different select-a-sessions, participants were exposed to many new ideas. Many participants stated the most valuable part of ***Explore Direct*** was the opportunity to share ideas and network with other farm direct marketers. Participant highlights were interacting with other people, exchanging ideas and meeting and connecting with other producers.

There was a tie for the winner of the first Best Brochure Award. Congratulations to Wayne and Barbara Hryniw from Wayne's Cedarworks in Edmonton and Theo and Esther Slingerland from Robinpick Berry Farm at Shaughnessy. Wayne and Barbara Hryniw make exclusive outdoor cedar patio furniture and sell it at farmers' markets under the Cedarworks name. Theo and Esther Slingerland operate a u-pick berry enterprise and a 'senen-acre' corn maze with a small petting zoo, north of Lethbridge. The corn maze is their biggest draw, attracting about 5,500 visitors last year.

The next ***Explore Direct*** conference will be held in 2005. Various ***Explore Direct*** events, such as regional workshops and tours, will be held throughout the year.

Contact: Marian Williams
(780) 679-1360

Winter sampling of deer in areas north of Edmonton

To improve monitoring for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) staff is collecting a sample of approximately 300 wild deer. This will occur between mid-February and late March in two sampling areas: one centred around Gibbons and Bon Accord and another near Fort Assiniboine, north and west of Edmonton.

This sampling program will be conducted with the cooperation of local landowners and sampling will not be done on private property without the landowner's consent. Affected landholders will be contacted, personally or by phone, by Fish and Wildlife staff. Also, an information package outlining the purpose of the study and providing basic background information about chronic wasting disease will be sent to landowners in these areas.

The sample will include approximately 300 adult deer, and may include a few elk. ASRD staff will collect the deer by shooting, which will be done in a safe manner that minimizes disturbance of landholders in their day-to-day activities, and avoids disturbing livestock and non-target wildlife.

CWD was recently confirmed in a game-farmed elk and a farmed white-tailed deer on two different farms north of Edmonton. These are the only known occurrences of CWD in Alberta. The department has identified a need to increase the level of surveillance in the general vicinity of the affected farms as a way to assess whether the disease occurs in the wild.

Alberta has a coordinated CWD surveillance plan. As part of ongoing surveillance in Alberta, more than 3000 wild and over 6300 farmed deer and elk have been examined since 1996, with only one farmed elk and one farmed white-tailed deer being confirmed with CWD. The majority of samples from wild elk and deer were obtained from animals harvested during the normal fall hunting seasons, as well as in 2001 from a special spring collection along the border with Saskatchewan. There has been a moratorium on the importation of farmed cervids into Alberta, including from Saskatchewan, since 1988.

CWD is a fatal, nervous system disease of deer and elk that damages the brain. There is no evidence of natural transmission of this disease to traditional livestock or humans. It is similar to, but different from, scrapie in sheep and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle, also known as mad cow disease.

The analysis of samples is expected to be completed within three to four months following the sampling. All testing is conducted by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development in their provincial diagnostic labs. ASRD is committed to communicating the results to Albertans. If any infected deer are found, the public will be notified as soon as the test results are confirmed.

For more information on CWD, visit the ASRD web site at: <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/fw/diseases/index.html>.

Contact: Dr. Margo Pybus
ASRD, Fish and Wildlife Division
(780) 427-3462

Dave Ealey
ASRD, Communications
(780) 427-8636

Outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000 for toll-free connection

2003 Emerald Awards

The Emerald Foundation is once again seeking Alberta individuals, organizations and community groups that have demonstrated excellence in activities to protect, preserve, enhance and sustain our environment. Nomination forms for the 2003 Emerald Awards to recognize these individuals are now available from the Alberta Emerald Foundation for Environmental Excellence.

"Nominations can be made in a variety of categories including small or large business, corporate or institutional leadership, research and innovation, individual commitment, not-for-profit association or community group, education, government institution and climate change," says Becky Vander Steen, with the Emerald Foundation, Edmonton. "A new award is being introduced for 2003 - the Youth Award will recognize initiatives by young people up to the age of 25 who have taken innovative action to address or substantially mitigate a local, regional or provincial environmental issue."

Full details about this award are available on the Emerald Awards web site, or from the Emerald Awards office.

In order to be considered for an Emerald Award the individual or initiative should meet the criteria that include demonstration of:

- a commitment to preservation, protection, enhancement or sustainability of the environment
- positive, tangible and long-term impact on: quality of air, water or land preservation of biological diversity
- climate change/greenhouse gases
- public or corporate attitudes toward the environment

Where appropriate, judging will acknowledge efforts that reflect collaborative, team- or partnership-based approaches that have contributed to the success of the nomination.

Nominations close on February 28, 2003; finalists will be announced in May, and the 12th Annual Emerald Awards celebration will take place on June 11, 2003 at the EPCOR Centre for the Performing Arts in Calgary.

For more information about the Emerald Awards or to request a nomination form, contact Vander Steen at (780) 413-9629 or 1-800-219-8329, or by email at <info@emeraldawards.com>. More information is available from the Emerald Awards web site at <www.emeraldawards.com>.

Contact: Becky Vander Steen
(780) 413-9629

Markets made to "savor time" not save it

Why do people shop at Farmers' Markets? Recent research from the Alberta Farmers' Market Association indicates that consumers like the atmosphere and friendliness of shopping at markets. John Stanley, keynote speaker at the recent ***Explore Direct*** conference, indicated that, "many consumers today want to savor time rather that save time when they do their food shopping." They love the personal service and expert knowledge of the product that they receive at Farmers' Markets. They enjoy the opportunity to meet and talk with producers and find out about how the product was grown, processed or prepared.

"Vendors need to consider the image the market and their product portray to the consumer," says Penny Wilkes, farmers' market specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton.

Businesses at farmers' markets should ask themselves:

- are staff neat, friendly, reliable, and honestly willing to help the consumer?
- are displays clean, attractive, inviting – a place where people want to linger and look?
- is signage clear, and representative of the company and the product?
- is the product fresh, high quality, attractively displayed, well labeled, and inviting to the consumer?

As a market manager, it's up to you to look around the market site and make sure it's energizing. Ensure that there is adequate space for people to move comfortably about. People want to have fun, so perhaps consider music, entertainment or events that would make customers linger a little longer. "More practically," says Wilkes, "make sure the market space is clean, and is there good access to washrooms. Additionally, places to rest or sit and enjoy a coffee and a visit and close, convenient parking can make the market more appealing. Details are what it is all about. Attention to small things will add up to an "experience to savor" for your customers and increased revenue for vendors."

Contact: Penny Wilkes
(780) 427-4514

Agri-News Briefs

Planning a native plant project?

A new publication, ***Establishing Native Plant Communities*** is now available from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The book will help anyone who is planning or implementing a native plant revegetation project. This 93 page book that contains over 100 colour photographs, is arranged in sections. The planning section features information about setting goals, disturbance types, site location and conditions, land use planning, revegetation methods, salvaging materials, the availability of materials and purchasing materials. The field operations section deals with site preparation, seeding, planting and ensuring establishment. The management section looks at weed control, maintenance and site protection, while the assessment section looks at record keeping, rare plant mitigation and evaluating site success. The book also contains a seed mix calculator and specific information about new taxonomy, germination and the establishment of various native species. Cost of ***Establishing Native Plant Communities*** is $30 (plus GST) and is available through the publications office of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6. Publication orders can also be placed by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697or (780) 427-0391 in Edmonton. Please add $2 (plus GST) per order for shipping and handling.

Turkey AGM

The Alberta Turkey Producers 37th annual general meeting is being held at the Capri Centre in Red Deer on February 25. As well as the business portion of the meeting, guest speakers are scheduled to make presentations about the industry, the importance of animal welfare and research successes over the past year. Two new board members will also be elected at the meeting. For further information about the meeting or to receive a nomination form, contact the Alberta Turkey Producers office at (780) 465-5755.

Farmers' markets, a community asset

There's a saying that 'it takes a community to raise a child'. Philip Powell, manager of the Byward Market in Ottawa, feels that it takes a community to have a successful Farmers' Market, too. According to Powell, markets that thrive have the support and participation of all aspects of the community. "When there is something happening in your community, you want it reflected in the market," says Powell. He makes suggestions such as, celebrating with local groups, museums, libraries, youth organizations and political organizations on important community issues. If there is a rodeo in town, have Rodeo Days at the market. If there is a major sporting event happening, celebrate it at the market. Successful markets are in touch with all aspects of the community – organizations, events, schools, media, government, associations and so on. "Farmers' Markets need to be community based and reflect the community. No two markets can look the same. Markets are not big box stores," adds Powell. The vitality and energy of a Farmers' Market depends on its uniqueness. People shop in farmers markets for the atmosphere – make sure that atmosphere is lively and tells the community story. For more information, contact Penny Wilkes, farmers' market specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, (780) 427-4514.

Alberta Berry School

The 2003 Commercial Berry School is being held at the Red Deer Lodge on February 28 and March 1, 2003. The Alberta Market Gardeners Association (AMGA) and the Fruit Growers Society of Alberta (FGSA) have planned a diverse program about the commercial fruit industry in Alberta that includes information on both production and marketing. Pre-registration costs of are $65 per AMGA or FGSA member for one day or $100 for both days; and, for non-members the cost is $85 per person for one day or $130 for both days. Student rates are available at $25 per student for one day and $35 for two days. Registration at the door will be offered if the school isn't sold out, and will be $75 per member for one day, $120 for two days; $95 per non-member for one day, $150 for two days; and, $35 per student for one day and $50 for two days. For further information on the program and registration, contact Joyce Megson (403) 748-2289 or e-mail <megsonj@telusplanet.net>.

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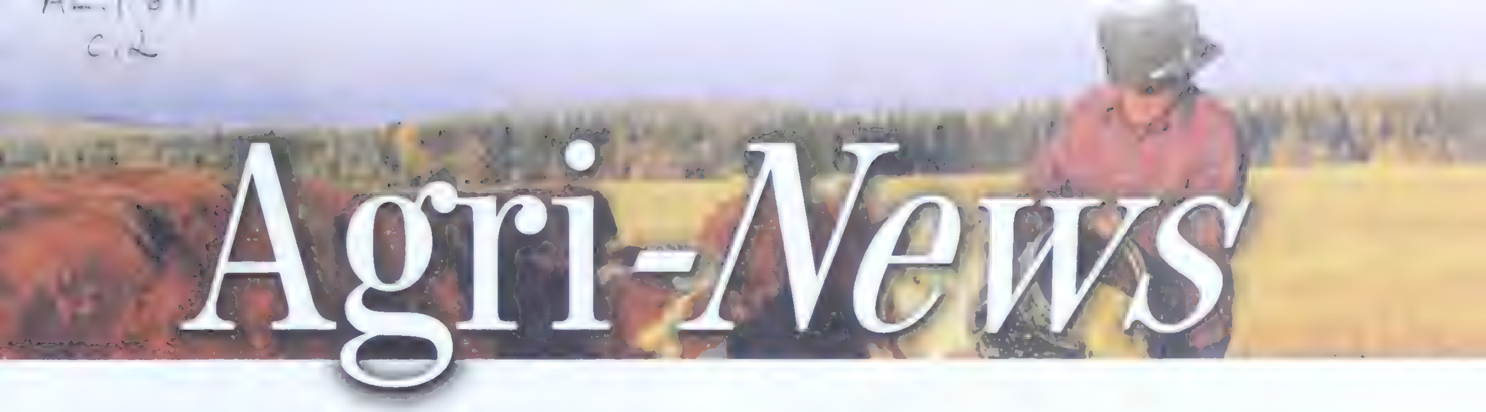

Agri-News

February 24, 2003

Dirt – what's not to like?

> *"Six to eight inches of topsoil is all that stands between much of the world and starvation."*
>
> ***National Geographic Magazine*** – September 2002

Sometimes it is easy to forget just how much our society relies on the health and quality of our soils.

"A recent article in the National Geographic magazine really sums up the importance of preserving our topsoil," says Shelley Woods, soil and water research scientist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Brooks. "Each year a tremendous amount of agricultural land is lost to various forms of soil degradation. This article says that despite the modernization and improvements in agricultural practices, degraded soils have lowered global yields by 13 per cent since World War II. And if we lose topsoil, we lose food; it's as simple as that."

According to the article, the main causes of this soil degradation are:

- agriculture practices, which is responsible for 28 per cent of the total land loss
- overgrazing – 35 per cent
- deforestation – 30 per cent
- fuelwood gathering – seven per cent

Woods says she found these figures shocking and sees them as another incentive to spread the word about the value of topsoil. "Like most soil scientists, I am often teased by people about the dullness of studying dirt," she says. "I take it in fun, but also take every opportunity to inform people of the importance, complexity and beauty of soil."

Despite the importance of soils in supporting plant and animal life, and consequently human life, soil science is a relatively new area of study, says Woods. Soil science involves the study of soil formation and classification, as well as an integrative study of the physical, chemical, mineralogical and biological properties of soils. Although soil science is most strongly linked to agriculture, it is also an important component to environmental science, hydrology, reclamation and engineering.

All soils consist of one to several layers called horizons. The development of soils is influenced by five factors, all of them working simultaneously. These factors combine to produce the various soil types throughout the world.

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The five factors are:

- type of parent material, which is the original mineral matter from which the soil forms
- topography and relief of the area
- climate of the area, which includes temperature and moisture
- impact of vegetation and other organisms, from bacteria to humans, on the soil
- amount of elapsed time since the parent material was set in place. Soils like those found in the prairie agricultural zones take millennia to form.

"Even before you add plants into the equation, the soil is a fascinating microcosm of life, with a multitude of microorganisms reproducing, growing, metabolizing, becoming dormant, reviving and dying," says Woods. "Estimates have been made that there are between one million and 100 million microorganisms in a cubic centimeter of topsoil. This translates to between 15 million and 1.5 billion organisms in a level tablespoon of soil."

Surprisingly, she says, very few of these organisms have a negative effect on human health. In fact, the opposite is often true. "Some soil microorganisms help in the decomposition of organic material into nutrient forms that are fit for use by plants in a process called mineralization. They also aid in plant nutrition by such mechanisms as nitrogen-fixing bacteria. One common fungus, called AMF, actually acts as an extension to plant roots, allowing for improved uptake of water and nutrients. Microorganisms serve to stabilize soil structure through humus formation and by supplying adhesive material to aid in the aggregation of soil particles."

Some soil microbes also act against plant pathogens. Others break down hydrocarbon contaminants in the soil and are useful in the cleanup of oil spills. Streptomycin, the important anti-biotic, was isolated from a soil microorganism.

"Basically, the soil acts as a living filter for wastes generated by humans and animals. It cleanses, purifies and recycles water. In addition to its agricultural and environmental importance, soil is also vital for industries like road building, construction, ceramics, cement and aluminum."

Woods says there is a misconception that soil degradation is a problem only in developing countries. "Soil degradation it is a threat to any society. In fact, soil degradation contributed to the downfall of several ancient civilizations. It is in everyone's interest to maintain healthy soils worldwide for the continued supply of high-quality, affordable food and water."

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Tax credit open to Alberta canola growers

Canola growers in Alberta who do not request a refund of their check-off from the Alberta Canola Producers Commission (ACPC) qualify for a tax credit.

The rate for Alberta growers under the Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SRED) program has been set at 3.7 per cent for 2001 and 20.5 per cent for 2002.

The tax credit is retroactive to January 1, 2001. To determine how much check-off was paid in 2001, please refer to your canola sales receipts. Then submit a request to adjust your 2001 income tax. The appropriate tax credit form for 2001 can be downloaded from http://canola.ab.ca/acpc/taxcreditform.pdf. Complete it and send it to the Winnipeg, MB or Surrey, B.C. Taxation Centre.

ACPC recommends that growers wait to make their requests until they can determine eligible tax credits from other commodity check-offs. Individual growers have 17.5 months and Canadian controlled private corporations have 18 months after December 31, 2001 to request the SRED adjustment for the 2001 tax year.

The following is an example of what an Alberta canola grower could claim.

- The grower contributed $200 to the check-off in 2001. If 3.7 per cent of that check-off went to eligible research projects, $7.40 is eligible to earn the Investment Tax Credit for 2001. For 2002, on the same amount of check off, the eligible tax credit is $41.00.
- For individual growers in 2001: $7.40 x 20 per cent = $1.48 (40 per cent refundable)
- For Canadian controlled private corporations: $7.40 x 35 per cent = $2.59 (100 per cent refundable)
- For individual growers in 2002: $41.00 x 20 per cent = $8.20 (40 per cent refundable)
- For Canadian controlled private corporations: $41.00 x 35 per cent = $14.35 (100 per cent refundable)

The tax credit may be used:

- to offset federal taxes owing in the current year;
- as a refund (if no taxes are owing, a portion may be refunded to individuals or the whole credit may be refunded to a corporation);
- to carry forward up to 10 years to offset federal taxes; or
- to carry back up to three years to reduce federal taxes paid in those years.

The amount of tax credit used or refunded must be reported as income in the subsequent year.

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For more information on the process for claiming the SRED tax credit, consult an accountant or visit the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency Web site at <http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/sred/>.

Contact: *Ward Toma*
(780) 454-0844

Cattle abortion – identification and prevention

The key to correcting the problem of cattle abortions is to identify the cause so that it can be prevented the following year. The problem is that diagnostic success rate of bovine abortions is only in the range of 25 to 35 per cent. Frequently, these abortions result from an event that occurred weeks, even months earlier and the cause is probably undetectable at the time of abortion, many causes remain unknown.

"Mycotic abortions may be seen in increased numbers this spring, due to cattle consuming moldy feed that is contaminated with mycotoxins," says Jessica McNeil, beef/forage specialist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "These abortions are typically sporadic and occur from four months gestation to term. Severe infection of the placenta will be seen, characterized by a leathery thickening of the areas in between the cotyledons. In about 25 per cent of the cases, the fungus invades the fetus and red or white ring-worm-like lesions can be seen in the fetal skin. If the fetus remains in the uterus, for any length of time after death, postmortem degeneration will hide the lesions. The afterbirth may also be retained, causing even more problems. Therefore, it's essential to develop a checklist to help you and your veterinarian explain and diagnose the problem."

The key thing that must be determined is exactly what the problem is. Producers need to determine whether it is a failure to conceive or if fetuses are lost. Pregnancy failure rate in cows and heifers should be less than five per cent as a production loss goal.

If the problem seems to be especially prevelant in one group of cows, the producer needs to find out what differences there were between the group(s) of cows that conceived and calved and those that did not. There could be a difference between cows that were home raised and new animals brought into the herd.

Other factors that can help determine where the problems are include:

- age – are affected cows from a specific age group
- what is their vaccination status – were modified live or killed vaccines used? Modified live vaccines may cause abortion if given to pregnant cows or to calves nursing previously non-immunized cows; this program must be initiated carefully.
- are they in good or poor body condition – in Canada the body condition scoring (BCS) scale is from one to five, one being very thin and five being grossly fat.
- what are they fed – the type, quality, and condition of feed are all important factors. Moldy feed causes three to 10 per cent of all abortions; remember that the inhalation of mold spores is just as dangerous as the consumption of them. Vitamin A deficiency may also cause abortions.
- what bulls were they exposed to – consistency of performance throughout the breeding season and the chance of STDs, are issues that should be looked at. If animals were on a community pasture, these issues must be looked at. STDs that cause abortions include Brucellosis, Listeriosis, and Trichomoniasis.
- do the affected cows have a common sire or dam
- when did the problem occur – were the fetuses lost at a certain stage of gestation? A loss in the last month of pregnancy could be due to nitrates in the feed. Handling, trucking or any kind of stress may also trigger abortions.
- did the problem occur on pastures or when their feed was changed – was the feed tested? Was the feed free of nitrates? Abortion due to nitrate is accompanied or preceded by some evidence of nitrate problems in the adult animal, including chocolate-colored blood and bluish discoloration of non-pigmented areas of the skin or mucous membranes.
- were many cows affected suddenly or did it pass through the herd slowly – typical abortions occur at low levels of about two per cent and are usually seen at the beginning of calving time.
- where did the problem occur – did affected and unaffected animals reside in different pastures, paddocks or ranges? What were the field conditions and the stocking densities? Did the animals have to compete for feed and water?
- Why did it occur – identify the cow that aborted and isolate it, recover the aborted fetus and membranes. Length of gestation can be determined by fetus size: two months, mouse; three months, rat; four months, small cat; five months, large cat; six months, small dog with hair starting to show; seven months, fine hair all over body; eight months, hair coat complete and teeth slightly erupted; nine months, incisors erupted.

"If you are having a cattle abortion problem, submit as many fetus samples as possible to the diagnostic lab," says McNeil. "The first calf to die is the most important, because getting a diagnosis on this one may help to avoid any more abortions in

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the herd. Call the veterinarian as soon as possible and keep them involved in the entire process. Notify the lab that you have a specimen to sample and send in to analyze. Collect samples, preferred specimens include, fetus, blood samples from cow(s) that aborted. The liver is often affected by abortive agents and should be examined and sampled. Lungs should also be sampled because they receive a good blood supply, and will show any inhalation of bacteria in later gestation and fetal pneumonia. Pack the fetus and placenta in double set of heavy-duty plastic bags and pack in ice (do not freeze), along with any blood samples or tissue samples and transport the sample to a diagnostic lab within 12 hours."

Without answers to the many important questions it will be difficult for a veterinarian to give a complete diagnosis or a herdsmen to change a management practice.

Contact: Jessica McNeil
Ag-Info Centre 1-866-882-7677

Alberta producers urged to keep up with AOPA developments

Alberta's *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* (AOPA), which came into effect January 1, 2002, set new provincial environmental standards and guidelines for livestock management. As changes are made in keeping with AOPA, it's important for livestock producers and those implementing the changes to stay informed and keep up-to-date with livestock management developments.

The Act gives the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) the mandate to regulate new and expanding confined feeding operations (CFOs), manure storage and handling facilities, manure application, and monitor compliance with the regulations.

"Government and the livestock industry have been working together to communicate AOPA regulations, standards and information regarding related developments to livestock producers, stakeholders, communities and the Alberta public," says Suzanne Leshchyshyn, CFO information specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Environmental Practices and Livestock Welfare Branch, Red Deer. "To date, a reference guide, newsletters, articles, factsheets and the AOPA web site are being used to ensure easy access to AOPA information."

The 16-page ***CFO Reference Guide*** provides a simple, easy-to-use overview of AOPA, and directs producers to the best place to get specific answers to assist them with complying with CFO regulations. The Guide is available from Alberta Agriculture, livestock industry associations, NRCB regional offices, and can be accessed through the Alberta Agriculture web site.

The newsletter, ***The Standard***, provides a summary of fundamental information on AOPA, such as the revamped application and approval process, how enforcement under AOPA works, and nutrient management standards. It also has tips to help producers navigate AOPA more effectively.

Factsheets and feature articles – are based on the most common questions from producers and further explain various aspects of AOPA. For example, one feature article outlined AOPA regulations for short-term solid manure storage and one of the factsheets focused on how AOPA affects cow-calf producers.

The fastest way to get the most recent Alberta Agriculture AOPA publications is through the web site <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/livestock/cfo/index.html>. This site is updated regularly with the latest publications and news for producers. Publications can also be obtained free-of-charge by phoning Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office toll free at 1-800-292-5697.

More information about AOPA can also be obtained by e-mailing an inquiry to <cfoinfo@gov.ab.ca>, or by contacting Leshchyshyn at Alberta Agriculture, 3rd Floor, 4920-51 Street, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada, T4N 6K8, by phone (403) 340-5359, fax (403) 340-4896, or e-mail <suzanne.leschyshyn@gov.ab.ca>.

Contact: Suzanne Leshchyshyn
(403) 340-5339
Fax: (403) 340-4896

Alberta Government numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first.

Creating attractions and events on the farm

Farm direct marketing is all about attracting more visitors and customers to 'the farm'. Farm festivals, events and attractions are growing in popularity and including some of these activities can help increase the number of people visiting the farm and that will ultimately increase sales.

"First, you have to decide what you are trying to accomplish – whether it is to make money, educate urban cousins, or promote the area," says Eileen Kotowich, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag-Entrepreneurship Division, Vermilion. "Remember that the experience is the attraction rather than the commodities, but, once at the farm, visitors will purchase the commodities. Brainstorm ideas with employees and family. Make a note of all ideas and refine them later. Don't try to be all things to all people. Focus on what you can do well and offer a quality product."

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Even though it may have worked for Kevin Costner in the movies, don't assume that if you build it, they will come. Market research is needed before any new venture is started. Most events and festivals in Alberta depend on local and regional support, so be sure to check with existing customers to see if they would support your idea. Look at what other events are hosted in the area and determine if you can draw on a large enough population base.

"When it comes to charging admission, there are two schools of thought that need to be considered," advises Kotowich. "A lot of effort has gone into planning the event or building the attraction and there may be a need to recoup some of the expenses. Also, some people feel that if something is free, then maybe it isn't worth going to, in that case, charging admission may help potential customers to see a value in it. On the other hand, it may be that expenses will be recouped with product sales on the day of the event, and that a free event or activity will attract more potential customers. Either way, a budget should be prepared for the event that calculates expenses and estimates revenues. Make sure that you at least break-even or the event is not worth hosting."

First impressions are important and everything contributes to the businesses image, so before the gates are opened to visitors, put yourself in their shoes and walk around the farm.

Make sure your place of business has:

- an orderly and eye-pleasing presentation
- good directions and attractive, well-positioned signs
- a layout that is easy to navigate
- well-trained staff that are friendly, have a great attitude and are knowledgeable about the operation.

"Don't forget to talk to the local municipal government regarding land use bylaws, development permits and signage requirements for municipal roads," adds Kotowich. "Talk to the local health authority regarding their interpretation of the guidelines on sanitary conditions and food preparation. Farm direct marketers should also talk to their insurance agent for property and liability coverage for visitors."

When it's time to promote the event or attraction, the traditional brochures, print and radio ads, trade shows and word-of-mouth are a good start. Don't forget the little extras, such as inviting local news media out to the farm or offer them free samples. A story about the business is a very effective form of advertising.

"A couple of other less glamourous, but very important things that will make your customers visit positive are convenient parking, perhaps even hiring a parking attendant for the day of the event, and adequate washrooms and hand washing facilities – this is critical and can't be stressed enough," says Kotowich.

At the ***Explore Direct*** conference held in Red Deer in January, Tamra Davison of Davison Orchards in Vernon BC shared some pointers on attracting more business to the farm She said that in order to keep people coming back, you need to have something for them to do. On their farm this includes regular attractions and special events. They offer orchard tours, have farm animals and a u-pick flower garden. They also have a gift shop, coffee shop and bakery on site so you can taste what they grow. Davison Orchards now hosts more than a dozen events during their season and they partner with other groups and assist them in fundraising events. It doesn't cost the Davison's anything to host the event, but it shows support for their community and results in sales on the day of the event.

"Remember, if you are designing an event or farm attraction, keep it simple to start with, offer a quality product, listen to your customers when they tell you what works and what doesn't, and above all make it a fun and memorable experience for all," says Kotowich.

For further information, get in touch with one of Alberta Agriculture's Farm Direct Marketing Initiative contacts:

Kerry Engel	Westlock	(780) 349-4466
Marian Williams	Camrose	(780) 679-1360
Karen Goad	Grande Prairie	(780) 538-5629
Eileen Kotowich	Vermilion	(780) 853-8223

or visit the web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>.

Contact: *Eileen Kotowich*
(780) 853-8223

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Agri-News Briefs

Peace Country agri-show

The theme for the 2003 Peace Country Classic is ***Growing For Success***. This event is being held in Evergreen Park, Grande Prairie, on March 5 to 8, 2003 from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each of the four days. The agri-show is intended to bring awareness, especially to students, about the role of agriculture in the Peace region and to promote local agriculture and the issues facing producers in the area. The Peace Country Classic is the largest agricultural show in northern Alberta and all are invited to attend. For further information, contact John Huffman, Agri-Show president, (780) 402-5804 or Ray Montroy, director of advertising and public relations, (780) 831-7237.

Dairy seminar

The Western Canadian Dairy Seminar is being held on March 11 to 14, 2003 in Red Deer. The theme of the conference is ***Building on 20 Years of Leadership***. Anyone interested in the latest information in dairy production and technology are invited to attend. Sessions cover a range of topics areas including: reproductive management, housing and cow comfort, dairy farm policy, secrets to success, forage management, managing metabolic disorders and managing for profitability. A panel of internationally respected speakers will address these topics during the three days of presentations. A full itinerary and list of speaker profiles are posted on the Western Canadian Diary Seminar web site at <http://www.afns.ualberta.ca/hosted/wcds/>. Conference registration cost is $235 (including GST). Pre-conference tours and workshops are also available at an additional cost. For further information, contact Joanne Morrison, conference coordinator, (780) 492-3236, fax (780) 492-5771 or e-mail <wcds@afhe.ualberta.ca>.

Insurance information on-line

AFSC (Agricultural Financial Services Corporation) has posted recent crop insurance announcements and other insurance and program information on the AFSC web site. This internet site includes a listing of several types of insurance and includes insurance information relating to: crop, forage, honey and straight hail, wildlife damage to stacked hay and wildlife and waterfowl compensation. The web site also lists and provides information on disaster programs, farm loans and business loans managed through AFSC. Newer publications are flagged in red. Visit the AFSC web site at <http://www.afsc.ca/default.htm>.

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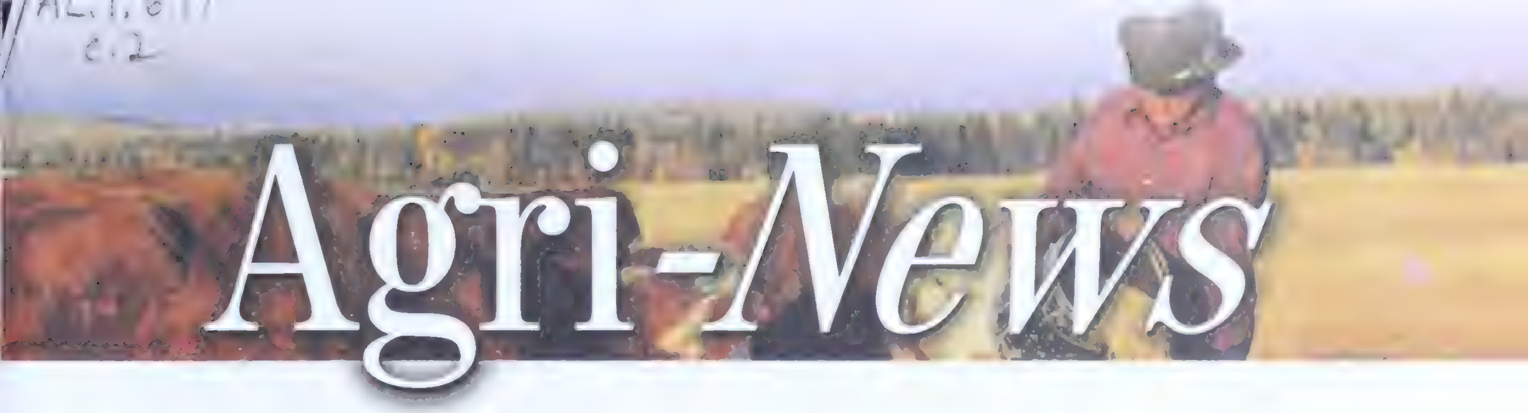

Agri-News

March 3, 2003

Preparing for possible continued drought

Concerns about continuing drought in 2003 prompted Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) to offer cropping strategy workshops throughout the province over the winter months. Workshops addressed many factors impacted by drought, including current drought risk, forage stands, dugout levels/water supply, cropping considerations for 2003, and marketing and financial concerns.

The Fall Soil Moisture map developed by Conservation and Development, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, can be viewed on the web at www.agric.gov.ab.ca/climate/Fall02.pdf. The map reflects a soil moisture rating of low to very low across the province. Measurements taken October 28, 2002, show dugouts range from one-quarter full to empty, with the exception of the southern and Peace regions. Pasture growth across the province is rated as poor, with a small portion of the southern region rated as fair.

"Continuing dry conditions throughout the winter hasn't alleviated drought concerns for 2003. According to Environment Canada forecasts, spring precipitation will be near normal in the east half of Alberta, and below normal in the western regions," says Lloyd Andruchow, head of program policy and evaluation branch, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "On the other hand, the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) is predicting below normal precipitation for the months of March, April and May.

"Although forecasters disagree on long-range precipitation potential, it is recognized that agricultural lands in Alberta will require above average rainfall for complete recovery."

Potential pest issues

Most disease and pest populations did not have a major impact in 2002, due to already poor crops. However, wet and cool fall weather was conducive to late season disease buildup, and that means that aschochyta and alternaria will be a concern for 2003. Fall grasshopper counts point to a possible record year

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Alberta

for grasshoppers in 2003, another possibility for concern for producers. Early observations do indicate that a fungal disease may help to limit the population in some parts of the province. A very wet spring would also be helpful.

Cropping and pasture strategies

Because of severe conditions in the province, seed supply is limited for many crops. If seed for 2003 is not already secured, now is a good time to do so.

Producers should consider which crops to plant based on moisture use of crops planted in 2002 (high/low) and what reserves are left for 2003. For low moisture levels, strategies are to select 2003 crops carefully and to consider minimum to no till cropping methods. High moisture rotation crops require as much water as possible to allow early seeding for highest yield, for example, perennial forages, and long season crops that can normally mature before any damaging fall frost.

When it comes to pasture, consider using techniques to take some pressure off perennials. For example,

- feed supplements on pasture
- seed mixture, fall rye and grain seed as soon as possible in spring
- conserve moisture
- minimum to no till
- allow delayed grazing
- stockpile annuals
- swath grazing
- manure management.

In dry years, it is very hard to establish new stands. Some perennial stands are being worked up because they are not producing, but this may not be the best decision. Be sure to consider plant population, plant stand age, type of plant, soil type, soil fertility and erosion risk, before plowing up a perennial stand. Pasture may last indefinitely if it is properly managed. An annual crop can produce twice as much dry matter in drought years so you need to evaluate options.

Market outlook

Crop prices are in the upper part of their long-term ranges. High prices tend to promote production. If the 2003 crop production year is one of average or better yields, then current prices are opportunities.

Many producers are reluctant to commit to forward price contracts because of the production shortfalls of 2002, and in many cases the resulting cost of buying out deferred delivery contracts. A production contract is one alternative to consider if you are reluctant to contract delivery of a specified quantity of product. The production contract will commit to delivery of production from a specific number of acres, often at a fixed price.

One disadvantage to a production contract is that it offers less certainty to a buyer and is therefore not as readily available as a deferred delivery contract. Another alternative for someone wishing to protect themselves from price downside on those commodities with a futures market and yet not commit to a quantity to be delivered is to buy options on the futures market. The option establishes a minimum futures market price and allows the producer to benefit from higher prices should they come about.

"Several strategies will be necessary to lessen the economic impact of a continued drought," adds Andruchow. "Producers need to carefully consider real income and financial structure, determining how much land to farm. Alternatives for freeing up operating cash, such as liquidating assets, may need to be analyzed. Financial consultants are available through AFSC (Agricultural Financial Services Corporation) to assist farmers to make choices that reduce risk in a high risk financial structure."

As a long-term approach to combating drought, a multi-agency team involving Alberta Agriculture, PFRA, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Alberta Environment developed the Alberta Drought Risk Management Plan. Severe drought in 2001 prompted partial implementation with the announcement of the Alberta Farm Water Program and the installation of new Drought Net weather stations. By the end of summer 2003, Alberta will have 35 new state-of-the-art weather monitoring stations on line. Development of drought triggers and forecasting science are also scheduled to be complete by the end of summer 2003.

In 2002, the Alberta Agriculture Ag-Info Centre received more than 40,000 calls related to drought. The priorities and gaps identified by callers are being looked at and will be addressed during information sessions to be scheduled over the next several months.

Contact:	*Lloyd Andruchow*	*Alberta Ag-Info Centre*
	(780) 427-3338	*1-866-882-7677*

Planning strategies for drought

Even though the 2002 crop year may go down as one of the worst in recent history, incorporating drought into your farm management plan may be one of the smartest things a producer can do to protect their assets.

"It's always prudent to have a plan in place because then you only have half the job to do if a drought does occur this season," says Dann Mattson, agriculture management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development in Olds.

"We're not always rational thinkers in the middle of a crisis, so it's a lot better to develop the plan before the crisis actually happens. This tends to give you a more rational plan and only

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leaves you with implementing the plan in the time of crisis. It's not a good thing if you wait until you have run out of water or pasture before you begin planning for drought as most of your risk management options are gone at this point," says Mattson

Although any long-range precipitation potential is hard to forecast, it is recognized that agricultural lands in Alberta will require above average rainfall over the next several years for complete recovery. Planning for a potential drought in 2003 may be a reality for many farmers across the province.

Producers need to look at the big picture when creating a response plan, and selecting certain strategies that will help alleviate any risk. "You need to look at the probability of the risk happening," says Mattson, "then you need to assess the level of devastation that the risk will cause if it does occur. If you can't afford to incur the cost of this devastation you must find a means to insure against the risk. Insurance should be bought to mitigate risk not necessarily to maximize profit."

Lloyd Andruchow with Alberta Agriculture's Program Policy and Evaluation Branch says some areas that producers should be assessing include potential pest issues, soil nutrient levels, cropping strategies and pasture strategies.

"When it comes to cropping strategies, producers should consider which crops to plant based on what moisture reserves are left for 2003. For low moisture levels, strategies include selecting 2003 crops carefully and considering minimum to no till. To help take some pressure off perennials, producers might consider using pasture strategies such as feed supplements, seeding fall rye and grain as soon as possible in spring and swath or delayed grazing" says Andruchow.

Several strategies are also necessary to lessen the economic impact of a continued drought. "Producers need to carefully consider real income and financial structure, as well as determining how much land to farm," says Andruchow. "Alternatives for freeing up operation cash, such as liquidating assets, may need to be analyzed. Financial consultants are available through AFSC to assist farmers to make choices that reduce risk in a high risk financial structure."

Recurring drought over the last few years and the severe drought in 2002 highlighted the need for a long-term drought planning and response plan for Alberta. As a result, a multi-agency team, involving Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and Alberta Environment developed the Alberta Drought Risk Management Plan (ADRMP). The plan, implemented in 2002, emphasizes preparedness, mitigation and equity in government response.

Severe drought in the summer of 2001 prompted partial implementation of the ADRMP with the announcement of the Alberta Farm Water Program and the installation of new Drought Net weather stations. 2002 saw full ADRMP implementation including involvement of affected municipalities on the Alberta Drought Management Committee. Recommendations and input from the committee were valuable in forming the government drought response this year.

"We will always have drought somewhere in our province, so a plan to assist producers to develop drought strategies is essential," says Andruchow.

For more information about assistance programs for Alberta producers, call (780) 422-9167. Information is also available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca or the AFSC web site at www.afsc.ca.

Contact:	*Dann Mattson*	*Lloyd Andruchow*
	(403) 556-4248	*(780) 427-3338*

Alberta Drought Risk Management Plan

To combat drought in 2002, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development implemented the Alberta Drought Risk Management Plan (ADRMP), a long-term drought planning and response plan for Alberta.

"Severe drought in the summer of 2001 prompted partial implementation with the announcement of the Alberta Farm Water Program and the installation of new Drought Net weather stations," says Lloyd Andruchow, head of Alberta Agriculture's program policy and evaluation branch. "By the end of summer 2003, Alberta will have 35 new state-of-the-art weather monitoring stations on line. Development of drought triggers and forecasting science are also scheduled to be completed in that same time."

The ADRMP, developed by a multi-agency team involving Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, Alberta Agriculture and Alberta Environment, will help ensure a coordinated and equitable response to future drought.

On January 29, 2003, Alberta announced changes to Crop Insurance that will give producers access to the most innovative and comprehensive program in Canada, helping them protect their farming operations against the volatility of weather and commodity prices.

Alberta Agriculture is currently taking inventory of all drought information available in consultation with other agencies such as the Western Forage Beef Group, AFSC (Agricultural Financial Services Corporation) and Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Association, to identify priority areas and gaps.

The province continues to work with the federal government and other provinces to ensure that the needs of Alberta producers will be met under the Agriculture Policy Framework (APF) implementation agreement. The APF, expected to be finalized in 2003, will provide an integrated approach to risk management including a more effective Net Income Stabilization Account (NISA) program.

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"Workshops held throughout Alberta over the winter were well attended, demonstrating that many producers are taking advantage of government sponsored educational opportunities and assistance programs," adds Andruchow.

Drought preparedness information is also available on Alberta Agriculture's web site www.agric.gov.ab.ca and updated information regarding government assistance programs to help producers through the upcoming crop year will be posted as available.

Contact:	*Lloyd Andruchow*	*Alberta Ag-Info Centre*
	(780) 427-3338	*1-866-882-7677*

Managing spring residual carryover

Getting a closer look at what's in the soil may give producers more foresight into what the 2003 crop year has in store for them.

"Producers need to be extra cautious in 2003 about herbicide carryover from last year's growing season that can potentially damage or kill their new crop," says Keith Topinka, a weed management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Dry conditions mean residual herbicides stay active longer in the soil. While the herbicide activity may provide longer term weed control, there is also a risk that it may injure susceptible crops."

Early spring rains may not help rid the soil of the residue either. It can take months or years for a herbicide to disappear. Both the moisture and warmer soil temperatures are needed to have that residual herbicide degraded by microbes or by chemical breakdown.

One of the first steps a producer should take is to refer to the herbicide label and determine if there is the possibility of carryover. "Fortunately, most herbicides are not a problem," says Topinka. "Some Group 2, 3 and 4 herbicides have recroppping restrictions on their labels, and that information is even more critical when the herbicide was sprayed in a dry year."

Dry conditions in 2001 and 2002 resulted in greater carryover of some herbicides. In some instances, herbicide residue damaged crops. In response to lessons learned under these conditions, manufacturers have made some new recommendations for 2003. "Updates are currently available for Prevail, Eclipse, Curtail M, Sundance and Prestige herbicides. Producers who used these products are being advised of safe options," says Topinka. "Some labels already state that dry soil will increase recropping times. There may also be other factors noted on the label that are critical to breakdown of the herbicide. Low organic matter near the soil surface can increase the length of time a herbicide is active in the soil, and pH levels can affect the rate of herbicide breakdown.

"Producers also need to be aware of their soil properties. Fields often have much more variability in soil quality than anticipated, and this unevenness (in knolls and low-lying areas) can result in the patchiness usually seen in fields with crop damage. Proper soil sampling before seeding can indicate which fields are at risk."

If crop damage is seen this spring, any herbicide injury can be confused and confounded with other stresses like cold or drought, and it's difficult to estimate potential yield loss. Some producers are intentionally leaving an unsprayed area when they apply residual herbicides, for comparison purposes later.

"Fields with herbicide damage should have similar effects on susceptible weeds, and the effects should be more noticeable in overlap areas, and absent in spray misses. If enough of the herbicide persists, it may kill the plants outright," explains Topinka. "But, at lower concentrations, damage can range from obvious discoloration, twisting, leaf cupping or loss of the main stem at early stages, to shortening of the crop with a yield, maturity or quality penalty. Damage should be reported to the herbicide manufacturer immediately if the producer feels a product has not performed according to the label specifications."

A soil bioassay can also offer more information on remaining herbicide residues. The crop is sown in a soil sample under controlled greenhouse conditions, beside the same crop grown in herbicide-free soil. After three to five weeks, the producer is sent a photo of the plants, with a written report. This service is offered by the Alberta Research Council in Vegreville, and BioVision Seed Labs in Edmonton for approximately $75 per sample.

"Unfortunately, dry conditions make residual herbicides less predictable," says Topinka. "Gathering information on recropping restrictions from the product label, watching for product updates, and knowing the quality of their soil will help with the decisions a producer needs to make this spring. But, for greatest piece of mind, a producer should seed a crop he knows to be tolerant to the herbicide."

If producers require more information, they can request the factsheet ***Plant Bioassay Techniques for Detecting and Identifying Herbicide Residues in Soil*** (Agdex #FS 609-1). This free factsheet is available from the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697. It is also available on-line and can be printed from Alberta Agriculture's web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/600/609-1.pdf.

Contact:	*Keith Topinka*
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2003 Grasshopper Forecast for Alberta and adjoining regions of Saskatchewan

Grasshopper surveys conducted at the end of the summer of 2002 at over 1,900 locations in Alberta indicate that grasshopper numbers remain high in much of east-central Alberta and west-central Saskatchewan, and will increase in numbers in some southern regions.

In addition to the normal survey at 1,700 locations in Alberta conducted by the Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen, over 200 additional sites were surveyed in greater detail for research purposes, with additional observations on grasshopper species, development, disease and breeding activity. The additional investigation and assessment of weather conditions later in the winter, allows more precise forecast updates during the critical hatching period coming in late May. Forecast and monitoring updates will be provided over the spring and summer. The survey monitored six species of crop pests, eight species of potential range pests, and 15 other grasshopper species. The additional survey was funded by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and supervised by Dan Johnson, research scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada at the Lethbridge Research Centre.

"The extent and timing of dry weather during the last three years has been a benefit to crop-eating grasshoppers that require sunny weather to breed in the late summer and warm, dry conditions during hatch and growth of the immature stages in June," says Jim Calpas, provincial integrated pest management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The unusually cold spring in 2002 delayed grasshopper hatching, especially in southern Alberta. Most grasshoppers had not hatched before the heavy rainfall that began around June 10. The delayed hatch after the rain resulted in grasshopper attaining adulthood late in the summer and laying fewer eggs than would have been possible in a normal year. A higher than normal proportion of the eggs that were laid did not achieve full embryonic development before frost in the fall. This means that the hatch will cover a longer period in the spring, for example four weeks rather than three, in some areas. If spring warming is more normal than in 2002, grasshoppers can be expected to hatch during the last week of May, continuing into June."

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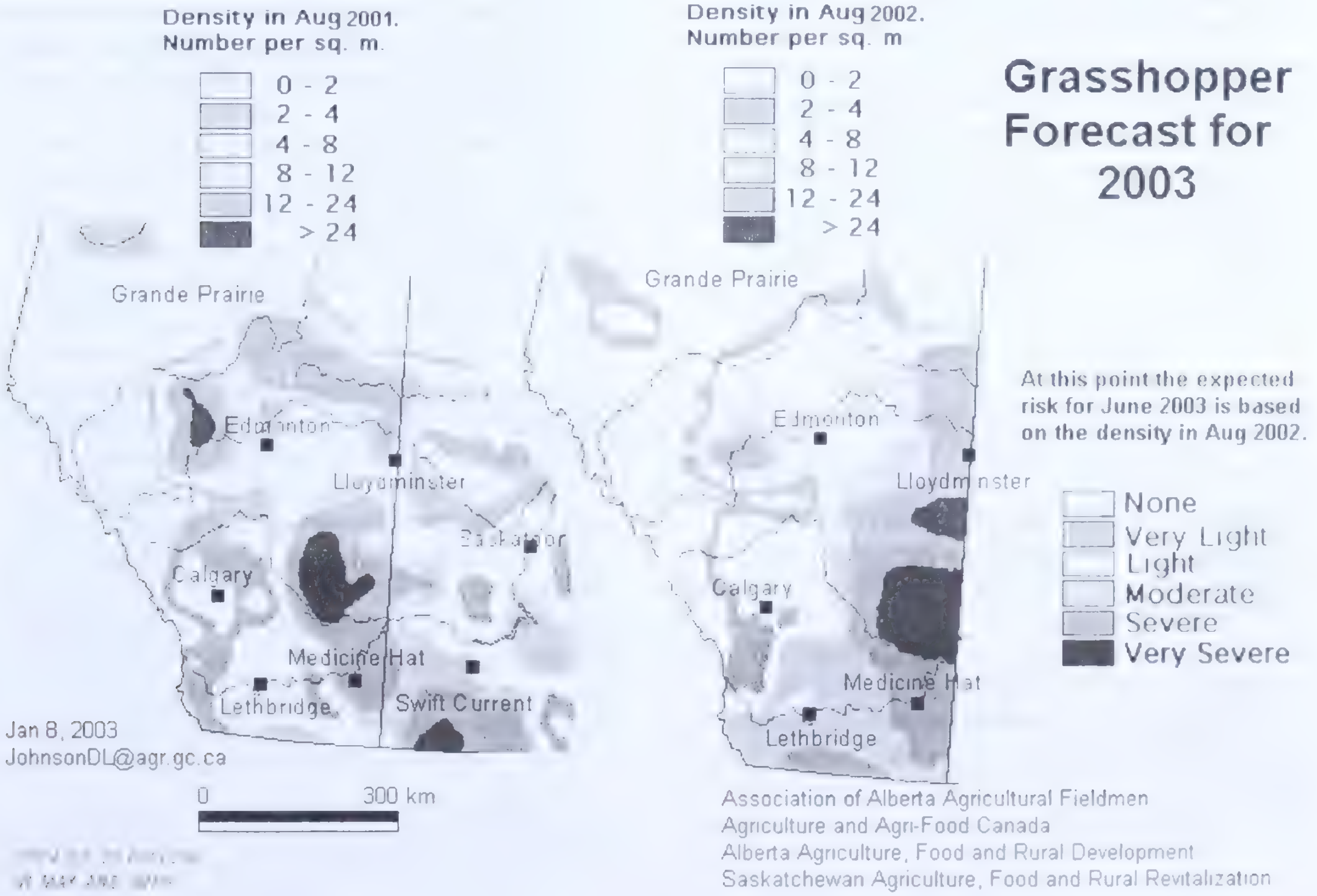
Density in Aug 2001.
Number per sq. m.
0 - 2
2 - 4
4 - 8
8 - 12
12 - 24
> 24
Grande Prairie
Edmonton
Lloydminster
Saskatoon
Calgary
Medicine Hat
Lethbridge
Swift Current
Jan 8, 2003
JohnsonDL@agr.gc.ca
0
300 km
Density in Aug 2002.
Number per sq. m
0 - 2
2 - 4
4 - 8
8 - 12
12 - 24
> 24
Grande Prairie
Edmonton
Lloydminster
Calgary
Medicine Hat
Lethbridge
Grasshopper Forecast for 2003
At this point the expected risk for June 2003 is based on the density in Aug 2002.
None
Very Light
Light
Moderate
Severe
Very Severe

Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization

The dominant pest grasshopper species in 2002 were the two-striped grasshopper and the clear-winged grasshopper. The two-striped grasshopper was dominant across southern and central Saskatchewan and southern Alberta, and the clear-winged grasshopper was much more common in east-central Alberta. Some non-pest species that do not attack crops also increased in 2002 relative to their previous low numbers (such as the Big-head grasshopper, the tiny spur-throated grasshopper, the Russian thistle grasshopper, the club-horned grasshopper, the white whiskers grasshopper, snapper grasshoppers, and others).

"The recent warm weather has no impact on the grasshopper situation, because the eggs are protected in the soil, and normally not affected by winter weather conditions," notes Calpas.

"Fence lines, roadsides, pastures, fields with a known problem in 2002, and crops grown on stubble must be watched closely when hatching begins in the spring," says Calpas. "Ignore grasshoppers seen early in the season with clubbed antennae, or with coloured wings. In most crops, grasshopper infestation in excess of seven to 10 grasshoppers per square metre will justify control measures, but only if damage is obvious and widespread in the crop or at least along the edge. Grasshoppers should not be controlled until as many as possible hatch. Grasshoppers should not be controlled if they are not severely damaging crops. When using insecticides, take note of precautions regarding user safety, label requirements, pre-harvest waiting periods, and proximity to wildlife. The objective is to economically protect the crop and not to achieve 100 per cent removal of grasshoppers."

For further information, contact Dan Johnson, research scientist with Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Lethbridge (403) 317-2214 or Calpas (780) 422-4911

The 2003 Alberta Grasshopper Forecast and a colour version of the Grasshopper Forecast for 2003 map is available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/pests/forecast/2003hopper_forecast.html.

Contact: Jim Calpas
(780) 422-4911

Preparing for spring under the threat of Fusarium graminearum

Plan ahead and get your *Fusarium graminearum* tests on seed grain done early. Under the **Alberta *Fusarium graminearum* Management Plan** all cereal seed must be tested and found negative for *Fusarium graminearum* before planting this year. Many of the seed cleaning plants are requiring proof of a negative laboratory test result for *Fusarium graminearum* before they will clean any grain. Planning ahead will help avoid delays in obtaining the tests and getting seed cleaned. Seed obtained from outside Alberta must lab test negative for *Fusarium graminearum* and it has to be treated with a recommended fungicide that lists *Fusarium* control on the label before it can be planted.

"Laboratories in Alberta are working hard to keep up with the volume of samples submitted for testing to date," says Jim Calpas, provincial integrated pest management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "As volumes increase, the turn around time on samples is expected to increase and as a result could take up to two to three weeks. The best advice is to send seed samples in for testing as soon as possible."

Livestock producers are also advised to start thinking about cleaning up the straw at bedding sites and beginning the composting process in spring to minimize the risk of *Fusarium graminearum* spreading from these sites. *Fusarium graminearum*-infected straw was brought into Alberta from Manitoba in some instances. This straw represents a risk for introducing *Fusarium graminearum*. Careful management of the leftover straw to ensure thorough composting can reduce disease risk.

The **Alberta *Fusarium graminearum* Management Plan** specifies the steps that must be taken to handle fusarium infected feed grain, but remember these steps also apply to infected hay and straw. *Fusarium graminearum* is killed on infected material that is fed to cattle, whether it's hay, straw or grain. Composted material that reaches a temperature of 60 to 70 degrees C for two weeks will also kill the *Fusarium graminearum*.

"The threat of *Fusarium graminearum* head blight to Alberta's cereal crops has required a change in thinking about normal agricultural practices," says Calpas. "We now have to consider how we handle infected materials to prevent the introduction of *Fusarium graminearum* into our croplands."

Alberta has had trace levels of *Fusarium graminearum* in some cereal crops for a number of years. It is important to ensure that these levels remain very low and do not increase. Alberta is still essentially and economically free of outbreaks of fusarium head blight, the devastating disease caused by *Fusarium graminearum*. However, it is important to understand that there is a huge difference between having trace levels of the pathogen and major outbreaks and major financial losses from the disease. This is the difference between the current situation in Alberta and southern Manitoba.

Contact: James Calpas
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Moldy feed and reproductive failure in cows

All homegrown feeds contain some fungal spores. When temperature and humidity are right, these spores grow and multiply creating mold. Mycotoxins from these fungal molds can reduce animal health and productivity. Many molds found in feeds are not toxic, but some varieties produce substances that can result in disease when ingested. Of the thousands of molds that grow on stored grains and forages, only a few produce mycotoxins.

"Contamination of forages and cereals often happens in the field (plant-pathogenic), but may also happen during processing and storage of harvested products and feed (spoilage)," says Jessica McNeil, beef/forage specialist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag-Info Center, Stettler. "Fortunately, the conditions necessary for mycotoxin production rarely occur in locally produced feeds. Producers should be aware of these diseases especially after an unusual year like 2002 and because some feeds imported from other provinces and the United States contain mycotoxins."

Beef and sheep have microbes in their rumen that act to naturally detoxify these mycotoxins, making cows somewhat tolerant to mycotoxins. High producing animals have an increased rumen passage rate and this may overwhelm the rumen microflora so that they can't denature all the toxins.

"Keeping a close eye on the herd is important as mycotic diseases may not be immediately identified in cattle," says McNeil. "These diseases are not transmissible from one animal to another, and treatment with drugs or antibiotics has little effect. Outbreaks may be seen seasonally because climate influences fungal growth and toxin production."

When mold is seen it does not necessarily mean that mycotoxin production has occurred. Several mycotoxins suppress immunity and that can allow viruses, bacteria, or parasites to create a secondary disease that is more obvious than the primary mycotic infection.

Rapid growth of molds can cause heating, which reduces the energy as well as vitamins A, D, E, K and thiamine available to the animal. Moldy feeds tend to be dusty, which reduces their palatability. Initially, relatively minor problems develop, however, within days or weeks of continued feeding effects are more obvious. There may be a decrease in dry matter intake, and so nutrient intake, weight gains, and overall performance may be reduced by 5 to 10 per cent. Animals may go off feed, experience ketosis, displaced abomasums, diarrhea, or signs of hemorrhaging. The reproductive performance of cattle may remain unaffected by feeding moldy rations, but incidences of reduced fertility or high rates of abortion may occur.

"Confusion results when people discuss mycotoxins in forages because several mycotoxins may exist, diagnostic methods are not consistent, and treatment and control recommendations lack needed research," adds McNeil.

Success of diagnosis of bovine abortions is only in the range of 25 to 35 per cent. Often abortions result from an event that occurred earlier (weeks to months), and probably the cause is invisible at the time of abortion, and many causes are never determined. Most abortions are seen in the winter. To correct the problem of abortions, identify the cause so it can be prevented next year.

- **Mycotic abortion** – mycotic infections are a common cause of abortion in individual animals, causing 3 to 10 per cent of all abortions. When offering moldy feeds, the toxins present will enter the blood stream and the pregnant uterus, abortions and infertility may result if the toxic elements from the moldy feed enter and infect the placenta. Abortion can occur any time from the fourth month of pregnancy to full term. Avoid feeding moldy feeds when possible.
- **Abortion due to *Listeria monocytogenes*** – the bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes* has a long history as a cause of abortion and is associated with feeding silage. Infection occurs primarily by eating or inhaling the organism. If large numbers of *L. monocytogenes* bacteria are present, they may invade the fetus and cause it to die. Abortion usually follows within two to three days. Abortion due to *L. monocytogenes* is common in Alberta. Treatment with antibiotics is the usual practice after an abortion has occurred. No vaccine is available for prevention. Cattle owners should be aware that *L. monocytogenes* also causes disease in humans.
- **Moldy sweet clover** can occasionally cause reproductive problems in cattle herds in Alberta. Coumoral is a chemical normally found in sweet clover and after harvest it changes to dicoumarol, a potent anti-clotting compound. Symptoms include abortion or death of a calf shortly after birth, extensive bleeding from the genital tract of the dam, and hemorrhage into the tissues of the calf.
- **Vitamin A deficiency** – rations made from actively growing hay or well-cured forages generally satisfy the vitamin A requirements of cattle. However, vitamin A levels decrease in feeds that are stored for extended periods or are spoiled. Symptoms of a vitamin A deficiency include reproductive problems in both males and females. Pregnant cows may abort; retain their placenta, develop uterine infection or give birth to weak, dead or blind calves. Bulls with a vitamin A deficiency produce semen with low numbers of sperm and high numbers of abnormalities.

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- **Allergy** – badly molded feeds contain large numbers of fungal spores. Cattle that inhale these spores may develop a respiratory allergy or bovine interstitial pneumonia, which prevents oxygen from getting into the blood stream. An infected cow will gasp for breath and the developing fetus may die due to a lack of oxygen. Abortion usually follows in a couple of days.
- **Aflatoxins** grow from a storage fungus; they grow well in conditions of relatively high moisture and temperature, but are very persistent under extreme environmental conditions. Cattle eating aflatoxins contaminated feed have decreased productivity, flesh growth and feed conversion. Aflatoxins often cause vaccines to fail and they suppress natural immunity. The reproductive effects of aflatoxins include abortion, the birth of weak, deformed calves and reduced fertility. Once the damage has been done, animals will not fully recover even if returned to a toxin-free ration.
- **Estrogenism** occurs most often after livestock eat field-damaged crops infected with Fusarium and crops that have been put up during cool, wet weather. Ingestion of infected grains can result in development of feminine characteristics in males, premature sexual development of young females, infertility in adults, abortion, stillbirth and the birth of deformed offspring. Cattle may have swollen vulvas and nipples, vaginal and rectal prolapse may occur. Also, a decrease in feed intake and perhaps feed refusal could be seen.
- **Vomitoxin or Deoxynivalenol (DON)** is the proper name for the most often detected Fusarium mycotoxin often referred to as vomitoxin. These toxins are present in the highest concentrations two to three weeks prior to seed maturity, ensiling will not decrease the levels of DON. DON in cattle has been associated with reduced feed intake, growth rate and immunity, also seen is poor feed conversion, general unthriftiness and lower milk production. Avoid feeding DON contaminated feed to pregnant cows and young calves, try to keep moldy feed for feeder cattle.
- **Ochratoxins** – these organisms are produced by toxins and frequently infest Canadian grain and tissues of animals reared on contaminated feed. Ochratoxins are associated with kidney and liver damage. Abortions have also been reported.
- **Ergotism** – ergot toxicity is most frequently seen during cool, wet seasons. Fungus infects the seed heads of rye, triticale, wheat, barley, oats and some grasses. Symptoms that follow consumption of infected plants include poor hair condition, poor performance, lameness and abortions.
- **Penicillium molds** – *Penicillium roquefortii* is sometimes found on moldy grains and silage. It is associated with abortion, retained placenta and reduced fertility in cattle.

"Abortion and death of newborn calves due to fungal invasion of the pregnant uterus and vitamin A deficiency are occasionally seen in Alberta cattle herds," says McNeil. "Reproductive failure caused by moldy sweet clover poisoning, allergy and mycotoxicosis are seen less frequent. When moldy feeds are suspected in cases of infertility, abortion, or the death of calves, a complete history and a toxic analysis of feed is required to establish a diagnosis."

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Alternative feeds

Because of the drought conditions that most of the province experienced in 2002, Alberta producers are feeding their ruminants alternative feeds. The following are some cautions and guidelines to keep in mind when feeding these products.

Canola can safely be used in the diets of ruminants in several different forms, keeping some precautions in mind. All forms of canola can be high in sulfur or nitrates and should be tested.

- **canola silage** – although it may take ruminants a few days to adjust to the taste of canola silage, it does make a palatable feed for them. Over all, most canola silage was put up wet last fall and this can cause animals to consume a lower dry matter intake which can effect the average daily gain. To increase this voluntary consumption, decrease the chop length of the silage or adjust the ration accordingly for energy and minerals
- **canola hay** – palatability can be an issue with canola hay because of the coarse stems. Chopping or processing the product can take care of this problem.
- **canola meal** – when oil is extracted from the whole canola seed you are left with canola meal (CM). CM contains high crude protein (CP - 35%) and crude fiber (CF - 12%). CM's high CF is due to the hulls that remains in it, this lowers the energy available from the product.

"There are some concerns when it comes to feeding of all canola products," says Tina Orom, beef/forage specialist at Alberta Agriculture's Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "Producers should not feed more than 50 to 60 per cent of the total ration as canola product to avoid high sulfur problems. When high sulfur diets are offered in beef rations, copper and selenium are tied up and this can lead to problems. These problems many not be immediate, but, at the time of calving there may be retained placenta, difficult calving, decreased milk production, scours, haemolytic anaemia and reduced conception rates. Make sure your ration is balanced by adding trace minerals to reconcile this problem."

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High sulfur also ties up thiamine and that can result in a condition known as polioencephalomalacia (PEM) a necrosis of the brain. "Don't let that word scare you," says Orom, "just watch for head pressing, muscle tremors and weakness. If producers only feed canola as 50 to 60 per cent of the diet, this problem should be avoided. Cattle require 0.15 per cent sulfur in their diet and can tolerate a maximum level of 0.4 per cent. In this year of drought, sulfur levels as high as 1.0 per cent have been reported. Sulfur levels of 1.7 per cent are considered fatal in cattle."

Producers should test all canola forage for sulfur. Sulfur is not routinely tested for, so be sure to request it when submitting feed samples. After receiving feed test results, consult a nutritionist and have the ration balanced. It is also important to identify all the sprays and herbicides that were used on the crop and check to see if they are safe for livestock consumption

Nitrate levels should be checked in crops exposed to stresses such as drought, frost, hail, insect infestation, disease, herbicide spray or those grown on heavily manured crops. Crops under these conditions can have an accumulation of nitrates and this can be harmful to the animals if not diluted. Nitrate levels can be tested for and should be less than 0.5 per cent for pregnant cows and calves and less than 0.74 per cent for feedlot ruminants.

Other alternative feeds that are being used more and more in Alberta include:

- **flax straw** is palatable to cattle and can be used in a feed ration as a filler. Flax straw should be restricted to 30 to 40 per cent of the ration. If the product is green or frozen, you should have it tested for prussic acid levels. Prussic acid levels can be even higher in plants that experience drought. Prussic acid inhibits oxygen utilization by the cells in the animal's body basically causing the animal to suffocate.
- **peas** peas are palatable and contain a moderate amount of high quality protein and a high level of starch. The energy content is similar to corn or wheat and can be fed raw to cattle in amounts similar to other concentrates with little or no anti-nutritional effects. Processing is not required, as peas are readily broken up by chewing. Peas should be introduced to the animals gradually to avoid diarrhea and reduced performance.
- **pea straw** can be used as a feed alternative in beef rations, although it can vary in feed quality and should be analysed so you know what you are really feeding. The average feed value, total digestible nutrients (TDN) and protein values, are similar to cereal straws. The digestibility and acceptance of pea straw is good as long as there is no mold present.
- **beans** have an energy content similar to cereal grain and a protein content of 20 to 28 per cent. Several types can be included in cattle rations, including: mung, faba, soybean, pinto, kidney and navy beans. The products available to the livestock feed industry are usually split, undersized or weather-damaged seed. With this in mind, be aware that weather-damaged grain may contain fungal molds and mycotoxins. Beans with any mold should not be fed to cattle. Beans that have been weather-stressed should have chemical analysis done prior to formulating rations.

"There are some anti-nutritional factors in raw legumes," says Orom. "They contain toxic compounds that will reduce intake and cause nutritional challenges including reducing the animals ability to digest feed and reduced growth and production. For this reason, beans should only be included at the rate of 10 to 15 per cent of the total diet. Beans should not be fed to young animal's with non-functional rumens or nutritional muscular dystrophy and abomasal torsion may result."

- **soybeans** are a palatable and economical source of energy and protein for ruminants. Soybeans are high in oil, therefore, intake should be kept to five to 10 per cent of the total ration. High amounts of fat can coat the feed in the rumen and will reduce the microbial access to break down fibre causing a laxative effect. Raw soybeans should not be fed to calves less than four months of age. This product contains trypsin-inhibiting compounds that make the dietary protein indigestible. Raw soybeans should not be fed to animals receiving urea in their diet. Urease is an enzyme contained in soybeans. It produces a rapid break down of urea into ammonia and can cause toxicity. Drought-stressed beans should be processed due to their small size, but they must fed within five to seven days after processing to avoid a rancid product.
- all **lentils** grown in Canada are cleaned leaving a five per cent screening that is available to use in the livestock industry. Feed grade lentils and screenings are comparable to peas and pea screenings. They are both moderate in protein levels and high in starch. Lentil straw has higher levels of protein and energy than cereal straw, but it can be coarser and dustier.
- oxalates and nitrates can be a problem when feeding **Kochia** if not managed correctly. Kochia is a forage similar to alfalfa if cut at the proper stage and not left to get too mature. This product should be fed at 30 to 40 per cent of the ration and calcium should be added to the diet to make up for the fact that oxalates will bind to calcium.

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- **tall, fine and hard fescue, perennial ryegrass** and **bentgrass** are grass species that can be used as straw in ruminant diets. All of these can contain endophytes, which are fungi that produce toxins harmful to livestock. Always test straw from these species to determine the presence of endophytes. If these grasses are used as a feed source, they should be diluted to avoid problems.

"The only way to be sure of what you are feeding is to have a feed analysis done," says Orom. "In a year with such variable growing conditions as experienced last year, it is suggested that all feed be tested. Once you have the analysis done you can call the Alberta Agriculture Ag-Info Center if you need help interpreting the results."

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Alberta Ag-Info Centre
1-866-882-7677

Pruning ban on elm trees in Alberta starts April 1st

Dutch elm disease (DED) is a highly destructive fungal disease that can kill a healthy elm within three weeks. There is an annual pruning ban on elm trees between April 1 and September 30 in Alberta because provincial trees are constantly threatened by DED. The pruning ban is part of the integrated pest prevention program to help avoid any chance of the disease attacking Alberta trees.

The smaller European elm bark beetle (SEEBB) and the native elm bark beetle (NEBB), vectors of the DED fungus, are active during the ban dates. These beetles are attracted to the scent of the sap given off by the open wound after an elm tree has been pruned. The beetles may be carrying the DED fungal spores on their bodies, and can easily spread the disease to healthy elm trees if pruning is done within these months.

"Pruning of elm trees in Alberta must only be done between October 1 and March 31 of the following year," says Janet Feddes- Calpas, provincial integrated pest management technologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Several municipalities already have an elm-pruning bylaw in place, which would result in a fine if you prune an elm after March 31. It is also illegal to transport or store elm firewood. All pruned elm wood must be burned or buried to prevent the possible spread of DED."

This last winter you might have noticed certified pruners in elm trees removing dead branches or removing dead and severely weakened elm trees. To get ahead of the threat of DED, elm pruning has been going on throughout the province. Elm bark beetles breed under dead and dying elm wood. Therefore, elm sanitation is essential to an integrated DED prevention program.

Although Alberta is one of the last geographic areas in North America free of DED, the SEEBB have been captured in a number of municipalities. Each year, between May and September, beetle traps are placed throughout the province. If beetles are captured, addition surveillance for the disease is done in these locations. DED is still being fought in the southeastern corner of the Saskatchewan and has been found as close as Moose Jaw, showing that it is gradually moving towards Alberta.

"The province does not have native elms, however, hundreds of thousands of elm trees worth millions of dollars have been planted in Alberta cities, towns and rural landscapes and shelterbelts," says Feddes-Calpas. "The elm has been the preferred tree to plant, not only for their stately beauty, but also for the trees impressive list of useful properties. It grows fast on a wide variety of soils, is easily transplanted, and has good regenerative capacity. Elm trees live longer (several hundreds of year) and are more disease resistant (with the exception of DED) than other variety of trees able to grow in Alberta. The elm tree is one of few species that can survive the extreme climate conditions in this province."

An elm inventory completed in 529 municipalities in 1999, shows a total of 219,334 elms, valued at $634 million, grow in Alberta's urban areas. An additional inventory completed in the rural areas of the Counties of Ponoka, Lacombe and Red Deer shows that three times more elms grow in the rural communities as shelterbelts and on homesteads. This brings up the estimated value of elms growing in Alberta to $1.5 billion. The elm inventory also indicated that 10 to 50 per cent of the trees planted in municipalities are elm trees.

Alberta's DED-free status is in large part due to the hard work done by the Society to Prevent Dutch Elm Disease (STOPDED) and Alberta Agriculture. DED, SEEBB and NEBB are declared pests under the *Alberta Agricultural Pests Act*. Alberta cannot afford to lose its elm trees! DED can be prevented and you can help.

To report a possible DED infected elm, call the toll free 310-0000 and then ask for or dial (780) 422-7199. For more information on the disease check out the Alberta Agriculture web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/pests/trees/index.html.

Contact: Janet Feddes-Calpas
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Over $77,000 in scholarship funds available to Alberta 4-H members

Senior 4-H members planning to enroll in post secondary education can apply for one of 115 scholarships that have a total worth of more than $77,000. "The scholarship program not only provides financial assistance for recipients, it also recognizes their 4-H, academic and community achievements," comments Mark Muchka, 4-H communications and marketing specialist, Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, Edmonton.

The scholarship program has been growing significantly. "With the support of 48 sponsors, the amount of scholarship money distributed to members has increased by over $30,000 in the past four years," says Susann McGowan, marketing coordinator, 4-H Foundation of Alberta.

Scholarship candidates must submit an application form listing their accomplishments and complete a written interview. Each applicant will be scored based on this information and selected according to the criteria set by the scholarship sponsor. A committee representing sponsors, the 4-H Foundation of Alberta, Alberta 4-H Council, University of Alberta and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development will select the recipients.

The 4-H Foundation of Alberta must receive applications by May 15, 2003. Forms are available on the 4-H web site at www.4h.ab.ca or from the 4-H Foundation of Alberta

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Alberta agriculture estimates

Many of the estimates listed below were jointly prepared by Statistics Canada and the Statistics and Data Development Unit of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Cattle and calves

- Alberta continues to lead the country in cattle and calf inventories (5.22 million head), followed by Saskatchewan (2.44 million head) and Ontario (2.16 million head)
- currently, Alberta accounts for 54.3 per cent of the total Western Canadian herd of 9.61 million head and 39.0 per cent of the national total of 13.37 million
- as of January 1, 2003, the estimated total inventory of cattle and calves on farms in the province was 5.22 million head, down 10.4 per cent from the January 1, 2002 figure of 5.825 million
- noteworthy was the decline evidenced in the beef breeding herd. As of January 1, 2003 beef cows totalled 1,845,000, down 5.8 per cent, from 1,959,000 a year earlier, while beef heifers for replacement remained flat at 250,000 head. The drop in cow numbers was to be expected, given an increase in cow slaughter and inter-provincial exports. Adverse growing conditions for crops in many parts of the province last year resulted in some producers being unable to source sufficient feed. Faced with the choice of buying expensive feed or selling cattle, many chose to liquidate parts of their herds.
- Alberta reported a total of 92,000 milk cows as of January 1, 2003, unchanged from the previous year. The same was also true of dairy heifers, with numbers holding steady at 36,000. This sideway movement in numbers suggest that the dairy herd had stabilized, following an initial increase of 2.4 per cent at January 1, 2002, from the previous year.

Pigs

- across Canada, Alberta ranks fourth in pig inventories (2.14 million head) behind Quebec (4.28 million head), Ontario (3.66 million head) and Manitoba (2.87 million head)
- Alberta currently accounts for approximately 33.4 per cent of the estimated total western Canadian pig population of 6.40 million head and 14.5 per cent of the national total of 14.73 million head
- estimates at January 1, 2003, show the size of the Alberta herd increasing by 0.7 per cent, with the total number of pigs on farms at 2.14 million head, compared to the figure of 2.13 million a year ago. The increase also marks the sixth straight year of herd growth, on a 'year-over-year' basis.
- Marginal contraction was evident in the sow herd, after twelve consecutive quarter of 'year over year' expansion. As of January 1, 2003, sows and bred gilts were estimated at 213,800, down 0.5 per cent from the January 1, 2002 figure of 214,900.

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Sheep and lambs

- after four years of steady expansion, sheep and lamb numbers on Alberta farms were down. The January 1, 2003 sheep and lamb estimate puts the provincial total at 187,000, or 14.2 per cent fewer than a year earlier
- while contraction was evident for all animal classes, posting the largest percentage decline were replacement lambs, falling 40.3 per cent to 15,700 head. Ewes fell by 11.9 per cent to 113,900 head, while rams slipped 11.8 per cent to 6,000. Market lambs fell by 7.6 per cent to 51,400
- Alberta currently accounts for slightly over 43 per cent of the total estimated sheep and lamb population of 432,600 head in Western Canada, and roughly 19 per cent of the Canadian total of 975,600 head. The province ranks third behind Ontario (280,000 head) and Quebec (230,000 head) in sheep and lamb inventories

Beekeeping

- preliminary estimates show 2002 to be a less than average year for honey production, with 24.0 million pounds of honey produced, compared to 26.8 million in 2001, and the five-year (1997- 2001) average of 27.5 million
- 2002 estimates are that Alberta produced roughly one-third or 32.7 per cent of the national total of 73.4 million pounds of honey
- the total value of Alberta produced honey (excluding wax) in 2001 was $27.5 million (29.6 per cent of the national total of $92.9 million). Comparable estimates for 2002 are not yet available
- in 2002, the estimated number of beekeepers in Alberta was 739, while nationally the total was 8,884
- Alberta reported managing an estimated 229,000 colonies in 2002, marginally up from 2001

Estimates of the 2002 crop production of principal field crops

- total 2002 production of major grains and oilseeds in Alberta was about 45 per cent of the previous 5-year average. The low production in 2002 was a result of poor yields and reduced harvested acreage, caused primarily by a combination of a cool and dry spring, persistent dryness, heat in July, insect infestations and early frosts.
- in 2002, total production of wheat in Alberta was estimated at 3.5 million tonnes, 49 per cent below the 5-year average and the lowest since 1977. A reduction in spring wheat production caused the overall reduction in wheat production. Total durum production was 843,700 tonnes, four per cent above the 5-year average and 80 per cent higher than the 2001 level, due to better moisture conditions in southern Alberta in 2002.
- barely production was estimated at 2.5 million tonnes, 56 per cent below the 5-year average and the lowest since 1964.
- total oats production was 285,300 tonnes, 63 per cent below the 5-year average and 52 per cent lower than a year ago.
- canola production, estimated at 793,800 tonnes, was 65 per cent below the 5-year average and 51 per cent lower than a year ago.
- total production of dry peas was estimated at 221,600 tonnes, about 57 per cent below the 2001 and 5-year average levels.
- total production of tame hay was estimated at 3.0 million tonnes, 41 per cent below the 5-year average and 30 per cent lower than a year ago.

Contact:	*Reynold Jaipaul*	*Chuanliang Su*
	(780) 427-5376	*(780) 422-2887*

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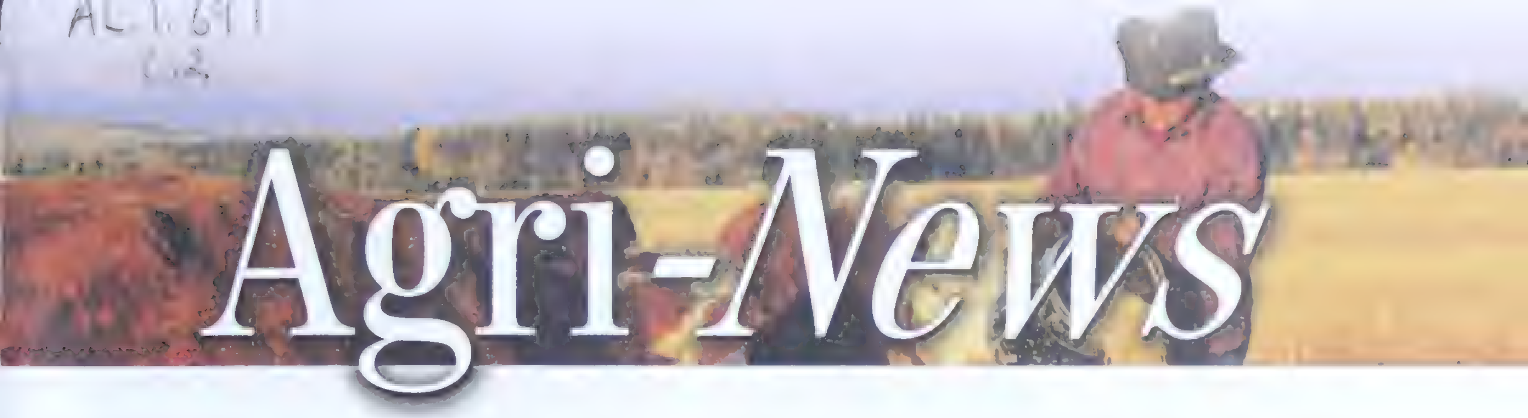

Agri-News

March 10, 2003

Farm safety and street smarts

The theme of Farm Safety Week this year is ***Farm Safety and Street Smarts***. Farm Safety Week runs from March 12 to 19, 2003.

"This year's campaign aims to reduce traffic-related accidents," says Laurel Aitken, farm safety coordinator with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "On average, one in 14 farm-related fatalities and one in 25 injuries involve motor vehicles. Two-thirds of these accidents involve tractors, and almost half take place during July, August and September."

Aitken says a recent study by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program (CAISP) identifies tractor rollovers as the most frequent type of single-vehicle farm accident. She says this type of accident usually involves a tractor rolling over into the ditch after being driven too close to the shoulder of the road.

As for multiple-vehicle collisions, Aitken says the study shows most occur at intersections. "Many motorists underestimate the width and speed of farm machinery. As a result, we see a lot of rear-end collisions with farm machines as they enter onto roadways. Left-hand turns at intersections are also hazardous and often result from someone forgetting to signal, or from a signal not being visible enough."

Aitken says there are a number of steps that can be taken to ensure safe machinery operation on public roads:

- attach a slow-moving vehicle (SMV) sign
- ensure that all signals and lights work
- use a rollover protective structure (ROPS) and wear your seatbelt
- lock the brakes together so that they will be applied evenly
- make sure all equipment is well below power lines
- never allow extra riders. Farm machines are designed to carry one person - the operator
- know all the various functions and operations of the machine being operated in order to be able to anticipate and respond to any situation
- ensure all machinery is in good working order before operating it

On average, 118 people are killed and another 1,727 are seriously injured each year in various types of farm-related incidents in Canada, with countless minor injuries that are

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never even reported. "The key to lowering these numbers is to remember that safety is a choice and not an act of fate," says Aitken. "All farm-related accidents can be prevented."

Contact: *Laurel Aitken*
(780) 427-4231

For toll-free connection, dial 310-0000

Traffic trends for farm equipment operators

A study by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program (CAISP) has found some trends and common denominators in farm-based traffic accidents.

"According to the CAISP study, an average of 13 per cent of farm-related fatalities are from traffic-related incidents, most of which involve tractors," says Laurel Aitken, farm safety coordinator, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The study shows an almost-equal split between single and multiple-vehicle accidents. According to the data, the most frequent type of single-vehicle accident is a tractor being driven too close to the shoulder and rolling over into the ditch. The most common type of multiple-vehicle collision is a farm machine being hit as it is turning onto a public roadway from a farm road or another public roadway."

Other trends found in the study include:

- a high number of rear-end collisions. These often occurred at intersections, and were frequently caused by motorists underestimating the size and speed of a farm machine
- a large number of collisions during left hand-turns onto highways or at intersections. Many of these accidents were caused by an operator either failing to signal, or by the signal not being visible to the other driver
- almost half of the collisions occurring during July to September, which is the peak season for agricultural field activity. Just over one-quarter of the accidents in the study took place in the spring, and one-quarter in the fall. Relatively few farm-related traffic accidents happened during the winter months

"When in rural areas, all drivers should be constantly on the alert for farm tractors, combines, wagons, trucks and other farm vehicles," says Aitken. "Even if you're not in an area where farm implements are moving from field-to-field, it's wise to be especially cautious on any rural road. As well, slow down as soon as you see a farm machine with a slow-moving vehicle sign (orange triangle outlined in red) and stay a safe distance behind it. If you do pass a farm vehicle make sure you can see the entire machine in your rearview mirror before getting back into your lane."

"If you're the one driving the farm machine, you have to be extra-careful anytime you take it out on a public road," says Aitken. "This includes being alert to everything going on around you, and ensuring your implement has appropriate lights and reflectors to be safely seen on the road."

Farm Safety Week runs from March 12 to 19, 2003. Its goal is reduce traffic-related accidents by promoting its theme of ***Farm Safety and Street Smarts***. "The long-term strength of our agriculture industry depends on a safer workplace for farmers," adds Aitken. "If we can help prevent one injury or fatality, we will have made a difference."

Contact: *Laurel Aitken*
(780) 427-4231

Farm safety program provides resources for Alberta's farmers

Farmers, farm employees and rural community groups looking for information on farm safety can find what they need through Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's farm safety program.

"The farm safety program focuses on prevention and awareness," says Laurel Aitken, farm safety coordinator, Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Its main goal is to help rural communities become aware of the various farm safety issues and to provide resources to help decrease farm hazards and unsafe working conditions."

Aitken says one of her current projects involves the ***North American Guidelines for Children's Agricultural Tasks***. "These guidelines have been developed to assist adults in assigning jobs to children aged six to 16 years who are living or working on farms. We're currently working with rural health professionals and community groups to train individuals on these guidelines. Once trained, these people will take the guidelines to farm families in their communities to help them match children's abilities with appropriate chores."

The farm safety program is also involved with the farm accident monitoring system (FAMS). The purpose of FAMS is to collect data on farm accidents from hospitals to provide pertinent information on the nature of farm accidents in Alberta.

Initially, 15 hospitals were selected for the survey. They were picked on the basis of the type and density of farming operations in their surrounding area to ensure that all types of agricultural operations were represented in the collected data. "Today, approximately 70 hospitals report to FAMS on a regular basis," says Aitken. "We encourage all rural hospitals to participate, as an increase in the number of monitoring hospitals would help get a more accurate picture of the amount and type of farm accidents that occur in Alberta every year. FAMS is an invaluable resource that helps all farm safety partners provide targeted safety programs."

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In addition, the farm safety program provides both print and web-based information as a resource for rural communities. "People looking for farm safety information can either call us or go to Alberta Agriculture's Ropin' the Web homepage," adds Aitken. "The web site has everything from injury statistics to children's activities to safety posters. It also has a links page that allows viewers to get information from hundreds of other safety sites." Aitken adds the farm safety program also has print materials, a large selection of safety videos, a child's computer game and a quiz game, all available free of charge.

Further information on the farm safety program is available from the Ropin' the Web page at http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/ruraldev/farm_safety/index.html. Laurel Aitken can be reached toll-free by calling 310-0000 and then dialing (780) 427-4231 or by email at laurel.aitken@gov.ab.ca.

Contact: *Laurel Aitken*
(780) 427-4231

North American guidelines for children's agricultural tasks

The business of farming continues to be a hazardous occupation. Each year, 20 children die in agricultural-related fatalities in Canada. Unintentional injury can occur when adults and children mistake physical size and age for ability, and underestimate the level of risk and hazard in the jobs assigned to children on the farm. Children are often assigned farm jobs based on parents' past practices, the need for "extra hands" to get the job done, and preferences of the child or parent.

The ***North American Guidelines for Children's Agricultural Tasks*** is a new farm safety resource designed to help match children with farm jobs. These guidelines, in development since 1996, were produced in conjunction with health professionals following child development principles and through discussions with farm parents and teen workers.

The intent of the guidelines is to provide parents with a framework to match a child's developmental ability with farm jobs. The guidelines take into account that there is a wide variation in children's growth and development allowing parents to match their own child's physical and mental abilities with the tasks involved in a variety of agricultural jobs. The guidelines do not give step-by-step instructions on how to do a specific agriculture task – instead they guide parents through a developmental checklist that helps them assess whether a child is ready to take on a certain task.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's farm safety program has developed an initiative in conjunction with Wild Rose Agriculture Producers (WRAP) to promote the use and application of these guidelines in communities around Alberta. The first series of training workshops took place from November 2002 through to January 2003 to present the guidelines to various rural health and agricultural organization leaders. These key community leaders were trained to use the guidelines and provided with resources that they will share with farm families in their respective communities.

Farm families can order a parent resource package by contacting Laurel Aitken, farm safety coordinator, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton, at (780) 427-4231 or by email at laurel.aitken@gov.ab.ca

Contact: *Laurel Aitken*
(780) 427-4231

New rules introduced for accessing public lands

New legislation will clarify the rules around recreation and exploration access to public lands leased for grazing.

The Agricultural Dispositions Statutes Amendment Act 2003 (Bill 16), introduced in the legislature on February 25 by Mike Cardinal, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, promotes cooperation and respect between disposition holders and other users of the land, through clearer rules and better communications. "The new legislation accomplishes a balanced approach, taking into account the varying needs of the users and providing for good stewardship of the land," says Cardinal.

Under the new legislation recreational users would be required to:

- contact the specific holder of a grazing lease or farm development lease before they enter the land for recreational purposes
- follow the duties outlined in the regulations such as: pack out all litter; refrain from lighting fires without consent; and, close gates

Leaseholders would be required to:

- provide contact information to the department (a public web site is being developed so Albertans can easily find contact information)
- allow access for defined recreational purposes unless certain circumstances exist. These circumstances could include livestock being present in a given area, or access being restricted by fire hazard level

The legislation would also provide an appeal process for resource companies who want to access the land for exploration purposes. In the past, once a leaseholder refused access for exploration, the company had no appeal. Under the proposed bill, if a leaseholder refuses entry a new dispute resolution process can be used. The final step in it is that the

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company can go to the Surface Rights Board and apply for a right-of-entry order to explore on a grazing lease or farm development lease.

The bill also includes various administrative amendments that ensure good stewardship of the province's public lands.

In a separate process over the next year, the provincial government will be reviewing surface damage compensation to leaseholders from the oil and gas industry, along with grazing rental rates and lease assignment fees.

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Echinacea workshop targets a growing market

An echinacea workshop is being held March 12, 2003 at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's crops diversification center north (CDCN) in Edmonton. "One of the reasons we're offering this workshop is because the echinacea industry seems to be on the upswing," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse industry development specialist, CDCN, Edmonton. "Currently, there are close to 60 acres under cultivation in Alberta with a potential market value of over two million dollars."

"*Echinacea angustifolia* roots are the main parts of the plant that are used for medicinal purposes," says Mirza. "The challenge facing growers is to obtain the highest root mass in the shortest possible time. Most producers grow this crop for three years before a good harvest can be obtained." Mirza says that the marketplace is demanding high-quality *E.angustifolia* roots which have at least 1.2 per cent echinacosides. Root samples tested during the 2002 season showed a wide range of echinacosides, ranging between 0.3 per cent and 1.8 per cent, although most of them were in the lower range.

"In order to meet the market demands, growers must learn how to produce quality material for local sale or processing," says Mirza. "There's no doubt that instead of selling dry roots, we should be processing locally so that we are marketing value-added *E.angustifolia*."

Following a very encouraging response to two echinacea forums held in September 2002, Alberta Agriculture business specialists and scientists put together an echinacea resource team. The team's goal is to provide the best possible information to Alberta growers on the production, processing and marketing of *echinacea angustifolia*.

"One way we are getting this information out to growers is through an upcoming one-day workshop. This workshop features a number of experts who can give producers all the information they need to get going in the echinacea business," says Mirza. "We also hope the meeting will result in the formation of an echinacea group or association in partnership with the Alberta New Crops Network."

The echinacea workshop is being held from 9:30 a.m to 5:30 p.m., March 12th, 2003, at the CDCN, 17507 Fort Road, Edmonton. The cost is $53.50, cheques made payable to the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association. Complete registration information is available at www.agga.ca.

"If the attendance at the last two echinacea forums was an indication of interest in this crop, we may add a second workshop on March 13," adds Mirza. For further information on the workshop contact Mirza at (780) 415-2303, e-mail: mohyuddin.mirza@gov.ab.ca

Contact: Mohyuddin Mirza
(780) 415-2303

Agri-News Briefs

Quick safety tips

Here are some quick tips that can help make your farm a safer place:

- cover all wells and septic tanks with heavy cement lids
- secure silos and grain bins so children cannot enter them
- enclose manure disposal lagoons and farm ponds with safety fences and post warning signs
- always leave a tractor power take-off (PTO) in neutral
- properly train and supervise new operators before allowing them to drive tractors or operate machinery
- do not remove machinery shields
- before operating any machinery, make a visual inspection of it and ensure bystanders are at a safe distance
- always observe the "No Riders" rule on the farm
- remove keys from machinery when not in use
- most animals tend to be aggressive when protecting their young; be extra careful around newborn animals
- be extra cautious with animals that have been separated from the rest of their herd; they can become depressed and unpredictable
- speak softly with a low tone of voice around animals; announce your presence to them before getting close
- be calm and deliberate when working with animals; avoid sudden movements that could startle the animal
- wear appropriate footwear for your activity, including boots with heels when horseback riding or steel-toed boots when handling most other livestock

The Alberta Institute of Agrologists annual conference

The Alberta Institute of Agrologists (AIA) annual conference will be held at the Medicine Hat Lodge in Medicine Hat on March 13 and 14, 2003. Speakers include Brian Keating, head of the conservation outreach department, Calgary Zoo, and Earl Geddes, vice president farmer relations, Canadian Wheat Board. The conference will conclude with the AIA annual general meeting. Call (403) 529-3844 for more information.

Record attendance at FarmTech 2003 Conference

FarmTech 2003, Alberta's premier crop production and farm management conference, was held at the Mayfield Inn & Suites in Edmonton from January 29 to 31, 2003. Total attendance at the three-day event reached a record-setting 1211 participants including speakers, sponsors, delegates and exhibitors. This marks an increase of over 100 from the record attendance set the previous year. "We are very pleased with the increased attendance and positive attitude of the delegates," said Kenton Ziegler, conference chair. "The past year was a very difficult one for agriculture and the educational program at ***FarmTech 2003*** addressed key strategies that farmers can use to improve their operations". Over 95 per cent of the delegates who completed a conference evaluation indicated that they received good value for their registration dollar, and that they are planning to attend the conference again next year. For further information, contact Ziegler at (403) 947-2508.

Farm safety project funds available through WRAP

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers (WRAP) is the lead agency for distributing funds through the Canadian Agricultural Safety Program (CASP) to Alberta. Approximately $90,000 is available for distribution to Alberta organizations involved in agricultural safety. Applications for CASP projects can be obtained by contacting Wild Rose Agricultural Producers at (780) 451-5912 or through the WRAP website at www.wrap.ab.ca. Additional information on CASA can be obtained through their website at www.casa-asca.ca.

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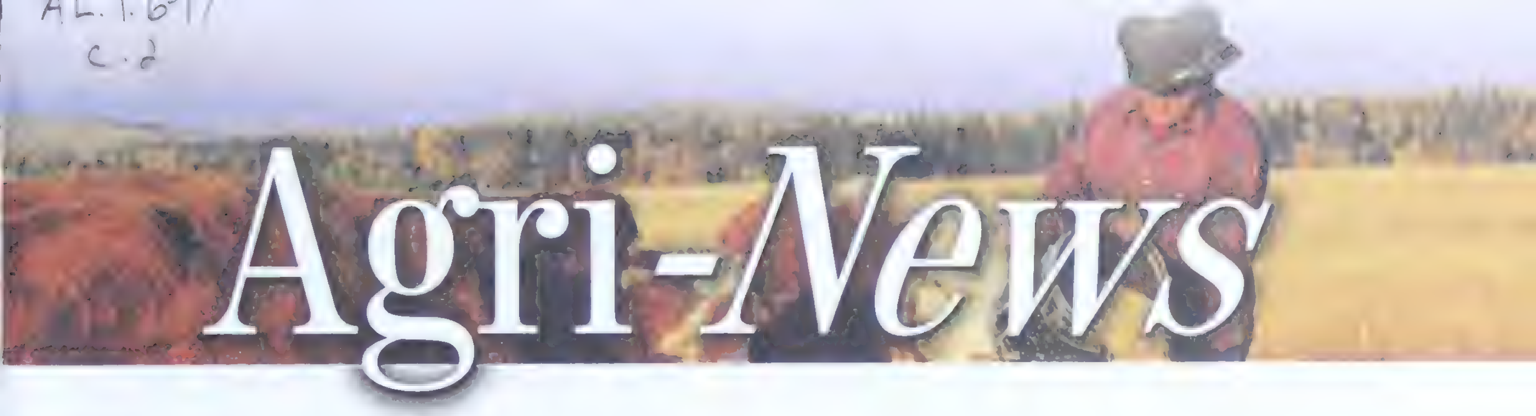

Agri-News

March 17, 2003

Crop Protection 2003

The information needed to make the best decisions on herbicide, insecticide or other chemical treatment needs for crops is available in ***Crop Protection 2003***. The crop protection book is reviewed, updated and produced each year to give Alberta farmers the most current information on herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and rodenticides.

"Commonly known as the *Blue Book*, the publication is the most up-to-date guide of its kind," says Shaffeek Ali, editor and leader of the pest risk management unit with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "The 2003 issue is easy to use and includes new pesticide registrations, formulation changes, minor-use registrations and a complete guide to safety, including protective clothing and first aid. In addition, many of the suggestions from users have been incorporated into the book to make it more user-friendly."

Details on the latest registered mixes and mix restrictions, application tips, expected results, storage and first aid precautions are included in the guide along with a listing of the weeds, diseases or pests controlled by each chemical

Some of the features in ***Crop Protection 2003***:

- an updated listing of pesticide container disposal sites with contact names and telephone numbers
- chemical group numbers on the same page as the chemical providing quick reference for herbicide-resistance management
- an updated chart on group classification by modes of action
- new pesticide registrations, new herbicide tank mixes and the new crop varieties for the new registrations
- a back cover featuring information on managing herbicide carryover under drought

"As well as information on new chemicals, the latest registered mixes and expected results, the guide provides ideas, tips and directions for sprayer tank clean-out, chemical application, storage and first aid precautions," adds Ali. "Even though the guide includes more information each year, the cost has been kept down. It's still only $10, plus GST, a great value that helps farmers protect their investments by helping them choose the right way to treat their crops."

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"Identification, advance planning and proper use are important concepts in protecting crops," says Ali. "Arming yourself with up-to-date information is cost-effective and makes good sense."

As well as the *Blue Book*, all the information about the selection and application of chemicals to protect crops will be available on CD-ROM this year. This CD program features the same information as the ***Crop Protection 2003*** book, with the added bonus of interactivity. Just a few mouse clicks takes you directly to the chemical information you need. The program can automatically find the chemicals that will attack a specific crop problem. The CD-ROM will be available within the next few weeks at a cost of $10 (plus GST).

The ***Crop Protection 2003*** publication is now available from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB, T6H 5T6, or by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697. The shipping and handling cost per order is two dollars, plus GST.

Contact: *Shaffeek Ali*
(403) 422-4909

Balancing cattle minerals can be a juggling act

Managing a herd's mineral consumption can often be a juggling act. However, the benefits of having a strategy in place for managing mineral consumption are well worth the effort.

"Livestock owners are often puzzled by their herd's erratic consumption of free-choice mineral and salt," says Susan Markus, beef specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Stettler. "In fact, some admit their cattle refuse to eat certain brands of both. Cattle will generally eat supplements for their salty or sweet taste, so how these supplements are offered may be just as important as what is being offered."

Markus says that if cows have access to both a cobalt-iodized (blue) or a trace-mineralized (brown) salt block they may eat at only one to have their salt craving satisfied. When both blocks are available to the cattle some cows may only ever get the blue salt while others may only eat at the brown salt block. This can result in a mineral deficiency in the herd. "The best strategy in this case would be to offer only one source of salt and if that source needs to offer the mineral as well, it should be in loose form so that the two can be properly mixed together," says Markus "If cattle are already getting lots of salt in their feed or water they might not be interested in the salted mineral. In this case the cows can be attracted by adding dried molasses or beet pulp to the mineral mix to make it sweet."

Switching from a block form to a loose form can increase mineral consumption by up to 25 per cent. Alternatively, if cattle are eating too much mineral, a change to a block form will reduce consumption. "Minerals should be fed on a daily basis. Cattle typically consume one to two ounces (0.07 to 0.125 lbs) of mineral per day per head," says Markus. "Cattle may consume up to half of their mineral and salt in the evenings. By placing the mineral in the loafing area or close to where the cattle bed down, mineral and salt consumption can be increased."

Where cattle require additional vitamins to balance their ration, one alternative is to feed them a large supply at one time. Since vitamins A, D and E are fat soluble and are stored in the liver, feeding the herd one to two weeks worth of vitamins at once can be effective if a carrier such as grain or chopped feed is available. "By feeding every two weeks a larger amount of minerals can be mixed into the feed, making distribution more uniform. We know how difficult it is to ensure adequate distribution of a pound of vitamin supplement in a few tonnes of silage and grain. As an example, a 100-head herd of beef cattle that requires supplemental vitamin at 0.01 lbs per head per day would be fed seven lbs once a week rather than one lb each day".

Thin cows and cold weather will also impact a mineral program. "To maintain healthy cattle in adequate body condition during cold weather, owners must balance vitamin and mineral intake as well as giving the regular attention to the protein and energy requirements of the herd. Certain breeds require higher mineral and vitamin levels compared to others, particularly high-milking breeds like Simmental. This year, spoiled or heated feed, or feed that has been put up damp, is likely to have lower levels of vitamin A than feed that was put up dry or in good condition with no rain or little time in the swath. Low levels of vitamin A will show up as reproductive problems later in the season if they are not corrected soon enough."

Markus says that mineral imbalances in rations of cereal greenfeed or silages may appear more frequently this year. As well, winter tetany or milk fever symptoms may be seen at increased intervals as calcium and magnesium levels are low and potassium is extremely high in these feeds. Cattle may walk with a stiffer gait or appear to have sore feet and legs. "Monitor your mineral program to rule this out and consult a nutritionist. By rectifying the source of the problem now, you will have fewer problems come calving."

Contact the Ag-Info Center for more information at 1-866-882-7677.

Contact: *Dr. Susan Markus*
Ag-Info Center 1-866 882-7677

Purple loosestrife in Alberta

Purple loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*, was once considered a desired garden perennial, but is now known as the purple menace. It is a tall woody ornamental plant that has an ugly reputation. An aggressive invader, this invasive weed can destroy wetlands by choking out native vegetation, creating a dense monoculture and threatening the natural balance and bio-diversity. Wildlife species that depend on the native plants for food and shelter are forced to new areas. Irrigation canals can be quickly clogged, possible affecting crop production.

"This beautiful plant was introduced to North America in the early 1800s and was sold as a popular perennial," explains Janet Feddes-Calpas, integrated pest management technologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Garden varieties of Lythrum were once believed to be sterile. Research has proven that under the right conditions these plants can cross-pollinate with escaped plants to produce viable seeds and may even produce seeds themselves. The first "official" report of purple loosestrife in Alberta occurred in 1990 at Medicine Hat. Since then it has been found in locations across the province."

With no natural control agents, the plant can spread rapidly through water systems. The majority of infestations in Alberta are located downstream from urban centers, indicating seeds or cuttings from garden plantings of purple loosestrife may have escaped into storm sewer outlets and have spread into wetlands via rivers and streams. It is for this reason *Lythrum salicaria* is listed as a noxious weed under Alberta's *Weed Control Act*. Under this act all landowners are required to remove purple loosestrife from their gardens.

"Purple loosestrife can be identified by its noticeable four-sided stem and its tall spike of tightly clustered pink-purple flowers that bloom from mid-July through to September," says Feddes-Caplas. "Its leaves are smooth, tongue-like and opposing on the stalk. This weed is very prolific, producing up to 2.5 million seeds a year per plant. These seeds can remain viable in the soil for many years until environmental conditions are right for germination."

Purple loosestrife numbers in Alberta have declined significantly since the Alberta purple loosestrife eradication program began in 1994. Alberta has been very successful in the reduction of plants in the 200-recorded accumulated sites. The 2002 records show that 26 sites have not had any plants for five years or more. This reduction is accredited to the dedication and hard work of volunteers, landowners, agricultural fieldmen, and weed inspectors. However, recorded purple loosestrife sites in Medicine Hat and Taber had substantially more newly germinated plants. This may have been a result of an abnormally wet season and indicates that a sizeable seed bank still exists.

With help from public awareness campaigns and riparian habitat surveys, new infestations are found every year. Most of these are small infestations (one to five plants) that can be eradicated quickly. In 2002, a total of seven new locations were found. All known infestations are re-inspected annually, and action is taken in a timely manner. The inventory clearly shows that the program is effective.

To report a possible infestation sighting, call the toll-free number by dialing 310-0000 and asking for (780) 422-7199 Updates on the control of purple loosestrife in Alberta, as well as further information on purple loosestrife, can be found on the Alberta Government website at http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/pests/weeds/index.html

Contact: Janet Feddes-Calpas
(780) 422-7199

Farm direct marketing initiative

In April 2002 Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development established the farm direct marketing initiative as part of the new ag-entrepreneurship division. The initiative works in partnership with farm direct marketing associations, industry leaders, North American direct marketing specialists and other Alberta Agriculture staff. Staff members working on the farm direct marketing initiative are located across the province.

"A first for the department, this initiative focuses on farm direct marketing research, education, advocacy and communication," says Kerry Engel, ag-entrepreneurship division, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "The farm direct marketing team provides inspiration, information and innovation to Alberta's farm direct-marketing industry."

Engel says there are several active projects and teams including:

- the farm direct protein team, which is an industry/government alliance addressing the challenges and opportunities facing those who are direct-marketing meat. Contact Rod Carlyon (780) 349-4466 or Karen Goad (780) 538-5629
- the advocacy team, which works towards the adoption of clear policies and regulations that support business development of farm direct and ag-tourism ventures. Contact Barb Vanden Bosch (403)381-5803 or Marian Williams (780)679-1360
- the farm retail (store) project, which evaluates the feasibility of farm retailing in Alberta. Contact Kerry Engel (780) 349-4466

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"The initiative's biggest event is the ***Explore Direct*** conference which was recently held in Red Deer," says Engel. "Over 200 direct marketers attended this three-day event. Seventy-four per cent of conference participants plan to increase the percentage of revenue their farm/business generates from farm direct-marketed products over the next three years. Upcoming ***Explore Direct*** programs include study tours and how-to workshops. Interested parties can call any of our key contacts for more information."

As well, says Engel, a farm direct marketing research study is currently underway. The data will help direct marketers improve productivity, track growth of the industry, increase credibility with lending institutions and identify opportunities. For information about this study, contact Linda Hawk at (430) 528-5280.

Farm direct marketing initiative key contacts:

Kerry Engel	(780)349-4466 kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca
Marian Williams	(780)679-1360 marian.williams@gov.ab.ca
Karen Goad	(780) 538-5629 karen.goad@gov.ab.ca

Farmers' market specialist:

Penny Wilkes	(780) 427-4514 penny.wilkes@gov.ab.ca

Alberta government numbers are toll free in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000.

Contact: Kerry Engel
(780) 349-4466
Cell: (780) 349-9017

Veterinary work experience program changes

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's veterinary work experience program (VWEP) will be running again in the summer of 2003, with funding support from Alberta Human Resources and Employment.

"The VWEP provides practical experience and career development opportunities for students enrolled in a doctor of veterinary medicine degree program or students enrolled in an animal health technology (AHT) diploma program, " says Julie Splawinski, client service representative, Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "In the summer of 2002, a total of 35 veterinary students and 15 AHT students were employed in this program."

Under the 2003 program changes, employers will be reimbursed for:

- 30 per cent of the employee's monthly wage to a maximum of $500 per month for students entering their first year of an AHT program
- 50 per cent of the employee's monthly wage to a maximum of $1200 for veterinary students qualified to enter their second year of study
- 40 per cent of monthly wage to a maximum of $1000 for veterinary students qualified to enter their third year of study
- 30 per cent to a maximum of $750 for students qualified to enter their final year of an veterinary program

Priority funding will be given to clinics whose practice consists of at least 50 per cent food animal work.

About 150 clinics were sent an application package in the first week of March 2003. Applications will only be accepted if they are completed in full. The application deadline is April 22, 2003.

Further information on the program is available by calling (780) 422-9167, faxing (780) 422-7755, or e-mailing julie.splawinski@gov.ab.ca. Information is also available on Alberta Agriculture's website at http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ministry/programs/vet.html.

Contact: Julie Splawinski
(780) 422-7755

Upcoming therapeutic essential oils workshop

An upcoming workshop on the marketing and production of therapeutic essential oils and hydrosols is being held at Olds College, March 29 and 30, 2003. The ***From Field to Finished Product: Therapeutic Essential Oil and Hydrosol Distillation and Marketing Workshop*** aims to cater to both growers and end-users.

"The workshop is hosted by the Alberta New Crops Network (ANCN) and features world-renowned aromatherapist Jeanne Rose," says Kirsty Piquette, business development specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, St. Paul. "She's also the founder of the aromatic plant project that is dedicated to encouraging the growing, distillation and use of North American plant essential oils."

"The market for therapeutic essential oils is based on quality via chemical analysis," says Piquette. "Francois Garneau, who is the chief chemist at Laseve University in Quebec, will do a presentation on obtaining high-quality essential oils from

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Alberta plants. He has analysed over 50 samples of Alberta production from 2002 and will offer advice on how to improve the quality of the oils."

Piquette will also give a progress report on a current study into the feasibility of a therapeutic essential oil industry in Alberta She will also update growers and entrepreneurs on where market opportunities may lie.

Participants will receive training on the Alberta new crops network mobile steam distillation unit. "It's an opportunity to take an up-close look at the science of using steam distillation for therapeutic essential oil production," says Piquette. "Hong Qi is one of the original designers of the unit and will take participants through the training."

In addition, the Olds College Centre For Innovation will provide a tour of their new lab facilities, which are currently gearing up towards testing of therapeutic essential oils.

Cost for the weekend workshop is $125 plus G.S.T for ANCN members and $150 plus G.S.T for non-members. To register, contact the ANCN at (780) 490-6462 or go to the event calendar at www.albertanewcropsnetwork.org

The event is sponsored by:

- Alberta New Crops Network
- Olds College Centre for Innovation
- Alberta Agriculture, business development branch
- Centre for Agri-Industrial Technology
- Alberta Crop Industry Development Fund
- Farm Business Management Program

For more information on the workshop contact either Piquette at (780) 645-6383, e-mail: kirsty.piquette@gov.ab.ca or Heather Kehr, ANCN essential oil committee, at (780) 795-2649, e-mail: mekehr@telusplanet.net.

Contact: Kirsty Piquette
(780) 645-6383

Agri-News Briefs

2003 deadlines for Alberta producer assistance programs

Here are some application deadlines to keep in mind:

- Alberta farm water program – March 31 (projects) and May 31 (application)
- Net income stabilization account (NISA) – July 31
- Farm income disaster program (FIDP) – July 31 (short form) and September 30 (complete form)
- Alberta disaster assistance loan program (ADALP) – June 30
- Crop insurance – February 28 (forage insurance) and April 30 (crop insurance)

Recent changes to crop insurance have added spring price endorsement and revenue insurance coverage elements that will better insulate producers from bad weather and low commodity prices. A new system of cushioning yields will be introduced in 2004 to help farmers affected by multiple disasters. For more information about any of these programs call Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development at (780) 422-9167. Information is also available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca or the AFSC (Agricultural Financial Services Corporation) web site at www.afsc.ca.

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Agri-News

March 24, 2003

When soil test results don't make sense

Prolonged summer dryness followed by late summer or early fall moisture can produce a condition known as the "birch effect" resulting in high fall soil nitrogen levels. This effect has been seen on the prairies for decades and can cause problems for producers using soil samples to help make decisions about the following year's crop.

"Producers often rely on soil samples as a source of data to help make important cropping decisions," says Doon Pauly, cereal and oilseeds specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "However, these soil samples may not provide reliable data in birch-effect years. Even in normal or above average crop production years, the birch effect will cause high soil nitrogen levels in the fall."

Doon says last year was a prime year for the birch effect in Alberta. The summer of 2002 saw the driest summer on record followed by early fall moisture. "Mix that with the high levels of residual fertilizer left behind by the terrible 2002 crop and it's no surprise that we're getting unreliable soil test results coming from samples taken late last year."

"Instead of relying on soil test results, crop production records can be used to make sound fertilizer decisions for 2003. The records required are total nitrogen fertilizer additions in 2002, total amount of crop removed from the field (silage or grain), and the protein content of that exported crop," says Doon.

Doon recommends the following steps be taken to calculate the amount of nitrogen removed from the field.

- calculate the dry matter exported from the field. For example, 20 bushels per acre of wheat (60 lbs/bu) at 14 per cent moisture (86 per cent dry matter) equals 1032 lbs of dry matter per acre (20 X 60 X 0.86)
- use the protein level of that crop to calculate the protein exported from the field. For example, if the 1032 lbs of wheat calculated above was 15 percent protein then 154.8 lb of protein per acre was exported (1032 X 0.15)
- convert protein to nitrogen. For wheat, divide the protein exports by 5.7. Therefore, this wheat crop removed 27.2 lbs of nitrogen per acre (154.8/5.7)

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Alberta AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND

- if 60 lbs of nitrogen per acre had been applied, the maximum nitrogen carryover for the next crop would be about 33 lbs of nitrogen per acre (60 lbs of nitrogen fertilizer minus the 27 lbs of nitrogen exported in the crop)
- to get the same yield in 2003 that was planned for in 2002, replace at least the 27 lbs of nitrogen per acre exported in the previous crop.

Doon says this procedure can be used for other crops using the appropriate bushel weight. For all crops other than wheat, the conversion factor from protein to nitrogen is 6.25 rather than the 5.7 used in the example.

"Producers should question soil test results that give zero nitrogen recommendations," says Doon. "Trying to grow a crop with no additional nitrogen fertilizer could be setting your 2003 crop up for mediocrity or failure."

"If you took any crop off in 2002, you exported nitrogen as well," adds Doon. "The amount of nitrogen removed by the crop can be calculated from production records. To maintain yield expectations from year-to-year, you need to apply fertilizer nitrogen at least equal to the exports from the previous crop."

Contact: Doon Pauly
Ag-Info Centre
1-866 882-7677

Rural tourism conference a growing success

"Extraordinary and unique presentations by a variety of operators and industry professionals were the order of the day at the ***Growing Rural Tourism Conference***," says Seth Downs, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's ag-entrepreneurship division, Edmonton.

The two keynote speakers, Trent Schumann and Celes Davar, opened the conference with an impressive presentation that took delegates on a photographic journey through rural Alberta. "The presentation left many wanting more from the two speakers, who were to prove over the course of the next two days that they were the perfect team to lead this conference," says Downs. "Delegates at the event were motivated and encouraged by what they learned and experienced."

Conference highlights included:

- a marketplace that showcased Camrose as a tourist destination and featured a blend of local entertainment, talent, cultural food, crafts and history
- a resource fair that gave delegates the opportunity to discuss one-on-one with experts from a variety of disciplines
- a mystery tour that took delegates to a secret location which turned out to be the Reynolds-Alberta Museum in Wetaskiwin. Once there, delegates enjoyed hands-on displays and vintage vehicles and machinery, as well as a special appearance by both the Honorable Shirley McLellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and the Honorable Mark Norris, Minister of Economic Development

"Another high point was a presentation by Derek Coke-Kerr, who is managing director of Travel Alberta," says Downs. "He addressed the potential of Alberta's rural tourism industry."

Some of the points Derek Coke-Kerr made included that:

- the urban markets are fully developed and it is time to focus on rural destinations and attractions
- Alberta is perfectly positioned to provide tourists with authentic Western Canadian experiences that will satisfy global demands in this area of tourism
- an estimated $1 billion will be spent by tourists in rural areas this summer

"For many attendees, this conference was a real eye-opener to the fact that success is right around the corner, and we all have the tools needed to achieve that success," says Downs. "While the theme was "creating experiences" for guests and tourists, the latter sessions of the conference focused more on practice – how to put your ideas into action and make things happen. For example, Schumann and Davar encouraged delegates to form partnerships within their communities and regions as a way of increasing tourism traffic to the area."

Some of the presentations and notes from the conference have been posted on the tourism together web page at www.tourismtogether.com. The next ***Growing Rural Tourism Conference*** is scheduled for 2004.

Contact: Seth Downs
(780) 427-4226

Innovative merchandising means thinking like a retailer

For many agri-preneurs making the transition from price taker to price setter requires moving to a new level, to that of the retailer.

"The first step to becoming an innovative merchandiser is by starting to think like a retailer," says Kerry Engel, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, ag-entrepreneurship division, Westlock. "It means rethinking some basic business behaviors."

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Retailing and innovative merchandising occur at many levels, from the farmers' market to a farm market or retail outlet on the farm. Innovative merchandising is a key component in a successful retail operation. "At the recent Explore Direct Conference, merchandising guru John Stanley told us it is a step-by-step approach," says Engel. "Visual merchandising teaches you to display what you sell in a way that compels people to buy it. You need to excite your customers and make your products wanted."

Engel cites the example of Kelly Hoffman, who recently opened a farm market in Oregon. Hoffman sells fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, most of which she grows herself; produce from other local growers; specialty jams, jellies and salad dressings under the Hoffman farm label; and, salsa, kettle corn and candles.

Hoffman found that merchandising presented a steep learning curve in her first year of operation. She learned a lot about choosing the right products and cross-merchandising. "Samples are the way to go," says Hoffman. "When customers can smell it and taste it they are more likely to buy it. After they sampled our salsa I had a sell-out!"

Merchandising tools and techniques include creating an image, cross-promoting (for example, selling the salad dressing with the greens), offering product handling information, signage, posters, displays, product placement, layout and customer flow.

Hoffman says she seeks out display ideas from:

- those with retail experience both in and outside the food industry
- home décor and do-it-yourself magazines
- retail and visual-merchandising specialists

Engel says innovative merchandising for farm direct-marketed products was the focus of a recent ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** newsletter. "The article looked at how to exceed your customers' expectations, impress them and get them to buy."

The ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** provides timely, incisive and creative ideas for agriculture entrepreneurs, and is available free-of-charge. Contact Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Westlock, at (780) 349-4466, e-mail: kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca, to be added to the mailing list.

For more information on innovative merchandising contact Engel at (780) 349-4466, e-mail: kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca.

Contact: Kerry Engel
(780)349-4466
(toll-free 310-0000)

Management of mycotoxin-contaminated feed

"The first step to avoiding contamination of feed and reproductive failure in a cattle herd is to minimize the production of mycotoxins," says Jessica McNeil, beef/forage specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Ag-Info Centre, Stettler.

Some helpful suggestions for controlling the production of mycotoxins include:

- plant early and harvest early seems to result in lower mold activity in the crop and decreased chance of mycotoxin production
- harvest at maturity and as soon as the moisture content allows minimum grain damage
- adjust machines and equipment for minimum seed or kernel damage and maximum cleaning
- dry all grain to at least 15 per cent moisture as soon as possible. Safe long-term storage can be achieved at a uniform moisture level of 13 per cent or below
- cool the grain after drying and maintain dry storage conditions and temperatures of 36 to 41 degrees Fahrenheit
- thoroughly clean the grain and all bins before storage
- store in water, insect and rodent-tight structures. The quality of the grain will not increase, but with good storage can maintain the same level
- continue periodic aeration and probing for "hot spots"
- use propionic acid or a mixture with ammonium isobutyrate, as registered on high-moisture grain in storage to prevent the growth of fungi
- choose varieties of grain that are resistant to insects, diseases and mechanical damage. Any damage to the grain provides a route of entry for toxic-forming fungi
- know how the grain was grown, because mold spore levels may be higher with no-till soil management
- optimize soil fertility to improve plant health and reduce mold activity; anything that helps plant health will decrease lesions and pest damage, suppressing mold invasion and mycotoxin production
- practice good silo management to promote optimal fermentation that will minimize mold and mycotoxins during storage.

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"It is important to have feed tested whenever moldy feeds are being fed, whenever substantial changes in health or production are seen, and whenever there is a decline in performance and health," says McNeil. "Take samples of individual suspect ingredients, concentrates and total mixed ration when sampling. There are problems with the sampling for mycotoxin analysis because mycotoxins are present at very small amounts, are not evenly distributed, and continue to be produced in storage. Mycotoxin content is not related to the amount of mold present. Remember that sampling must be random, but also remember that molds tend to be at the sides of bins, so be sure to include these parts."

To do effective dry sampling, take eight to 12 sub-samples at each of three to five feedings, or feed removals from storage. Mix these sub-samples well, take a 500g composite, and store in a cool dry place. Combine the three to five composite samples, mix well, and take a one-kilogram sample for submission to the lab. Store in a clean paper or cotton bag; do not use plastic bags with dry samples. Keep an additional 1kg sample for confirmation or for another analysis.

Another way to take dry samples is to take 12 to 20 stream samples from the entire delivery or 12 to 20 deep probe samples from a bin. Mix in the same way as just described.

Wet sampling is done by taking eight to 12 sub-samples at each of three to five feedings, mix sub-samples, and then take a 1kg composite sample. Store this sample in a tightly packed plastic bag and freeze. Combine the three to five composite samples, mix them well, and then take a 1kg sample for mycotoxin analysis, 1kg for moisture analysis, and a third 1kg for confirmation or other analysis.

"If it is grains that are contaminated, use of direct flaming, anhydrous ammonia or sodium bicarbonate will denature these mycotoxins," comments McNeil. "However, none of these techniques work on mycotoxin-contaminated forages. It is possible to dilute the affected feedstuffs with clean feed; this will help to minimize livestock problems."

Another approach is to consult a nutritionist to help neutralize the effect of toxins, including increasing ration level of energy, protein, vitamins (A, E, B) and minerals (Se, Zn, Cu, Mn).

"Continual monitoring of mycotoxin levels is advisable when infected forages are fed," says McNeil. "Remember that healthy, well-conditioned animals will be better at dealing with contaminated feed than sick, pregnant, young or stressed animals. A balanced nutritional program and adequate facilities that provide an environment conducive to health will help control losses."

Contact: Jessica McNeil
Ag-Info Centre
1-866-882-7677

Will the bugs be back?

Forecasting insect pest infestations is a vital part of an integrated approach to pest management. If there is enough warning of an insect infestation, producers will be able to deal with the pest before significant yield losses have occurred or even to make cropping decisions to avoid the problem altogether.

"Grasshopper outbreaks are forecasted on the basis of egg counts done in the fall and succeeding winter," says Mike Hall, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, pulse and oilseed unit, Fort Vermilion. "Currently, severe to very severe infestations are predicted this year for east-central Alberta." The Alberta grasshopper forecast is available at http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/pests/forecast/2003hopper_forecast.html and will be updated in May and June.

"Producers should be spraying for grasshoppers in cereals if there are more than 10 grasshoppers per square metre and there is significant and wide-spread damage at least along the field edge," says Hall. "There are 85 species of grasshopper in Alberta and only four of these are harmful to crops. In Alberta, pest species of grasshoppers typically hatch at the end of May to mid-June. Thus, the grasshoppers seen in May with clubbed antennae or coloured wings are not crop pests and should be ignored."

Bertha armyworm outbreaks are forecasted in-season based on the cumulative number of moths caught in a network of pheromone traps across Western Canada. "Although we've had occasional hot spots, we've seen relatively few bertha armyworm infestations in recent years. Bertha armyworm outbreaks are cyclical and tend to occur regionally every eight to 10 years. Outbreaks tend to last three years before being stopped by parasites, predators and disease."

Hall recommends using an insectide to control bertha army worms once the economic threshold of approximately 20 larvae per square metre is reached. This figure varies somewhat depending on the cost of insecticide and value of the canola crop. "To accurately assess populations, samples should be taken from three locations away from the head in a field. Uproot and shake all canola plants within a one-metre-square area, and count the berthas that fall to the ground."

Wheat midge forecasts are based on the number of cocoons in soil samples collected the previous fall. Infestations of over 600 midges per square metre may result in significant damage and yield lost if there are favourable weather conditions allowing pupae emergence from the soil. The 2003 forecast map shows that the area of infestation and midge populations has decreased in Alberta.

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"Although the risk of damage from midge has decreased, wheat crops could still be at risk and should be monitored between the emergence of the wheat head to the start of flowering. This is the stage at which wheat is susceptible to midge damage," says Hall. "The female wheat midge is active only in late evening laying her eggs in newly emerging heads. Thus, you should look for the wheat midge between 8:30 to 10:00 pm when temperatures are above 15 degrees C and winds are less than 10 kph. Insecticide should be applied if one adult midge is spotted for every 4-5 wheat heads. To maintain optimum grade, insecticide should be applied if one adult midge is spotted for every 8-10 wheat heads."

Hall says that producers can make their own predictions about the risk posed by some species such as the flea beetle. Since flea beetles are adept at surviving the winter, the number at harvest is considered to be a good indication of spring populations. Flea beetles are relatively unaffected by winter conditions since they migrate to shelterbelts and other protected areas where snow accumulates.

Cabbage seedpod weevils, which are a relatively new pest to Alberta, are continuing to spread. The highest populations are located in southern Alberta but seedpod weevils are present as far north as Red Deer. "Canola should be monitored for seedpod weevils from the bud stage until the end of flowering using a sweep net," says Hall. "Ten 180-degree sweeps from 10 locations should be used to determine the weevil population. An average of three-to-four weevils per sweep is considered to be the economic threshold."

Contact: *Mike Hall*
(780) 927-3712

Agri-News Briefs

Northlands farm and ranch show

The 37th annual Northlands farm and ranch show is being held at the Northlands Park Exhibition Grounds, Edmonton, on March 26-29, 2003. As Alberta's premier spring agricultural event, the trade show is an occasion for ranchers and farmers to view the newest in agricultural technology and products. Highlights include the pedigreed seed show, a used tractor auction, a miniature donkey demonstration, an Angus bull and heifer sale, and a spring livestock show and sale. Admission is free. For further information, phone: (403) 209-3563 or toll-free (888) 799-2545 ext. 563. Information on the event is also available on-line at http://www.farmandranchshow.com.

AFAC update and annual general meeting

The Alberta farm animal care (AFAC) association is holding its update and annual general meeting at the Red Deer Lodge on March 27, 2003. Topics on the agenda include on-farm animal welfare verification, foreign animal disease outbreaks and Alberta's livestock protection service. Registration is at 9:00 am with the first session starting at 9:30 am. The AFAC annual general meeting is scheduled for 3 pm. There will be a $25 charge at the door to cover expenses. For more information, call AFAC at (403) 932-8050, email: info@afac.ab.ca.

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Agri-News

March 31, 2003

Call of the Land celebrates 50 years

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's farm radio program, Call of the Land, celebrates its 50th anniversary on April 1, 2003.

"The program was first broadcast on April 1, 1953," says Jack Howell, farm radio commentator, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Its purpose was and is to publicize programs and policies of the department as well as look at what's going on in the industry."

Call of the Land is currently being carried weekdays on 20 Alberta radio stations and two stations in British Columbia. However, when the program first started in 1953, it had a much smaller audience. "The program was originally carried by just six stations, and there was quite a scramble actually getting those first programs to air," says Howell. "The original Call of the Land commentator was Everett McCrimmon. He arrived at work two weeks before the first broadcast was scheduled to find out his entire resources consisted of an empty office with a telephone sitting on the floor. As you can imagine, he had quite a frantic time getting the program up and going to meet that first deadline."

Howell says that while he has been producing Call of the Land himself since 1970, there have been ten commentators since the program itself started in 1953. "Everett McCrimmon first hired Stu Wilton as co-host. After that, in no particular order, came Scott Flewitt, Ed Hamula, John Andrew, Warren Wismer, Don Potter, Douglas Pettit, Phil Thomas, Gerard Vaillancourt and myself."

Howell says he's interviewed thousands of people over the years he has worked on the program. "I've interviewed every provincial agriculture minister since Henry Ruste, as well as Peter Lougheed, Ralph Klein, Eugene Whelan, Otto Lang and even Ralph Nader. I've also talked with numerous ordinary, hard-working department employees, producers and industry people."

"Over the years, technology has really changed the way Call of the Land is produced and delivered, " says Howell. "When the program first began, it was recorded on audiotape and copies were made of each broadcast and shipped by mail to stations two days before the program was to be aired. Now the program is produced entirely on computer and sent to the stations via satellite the same day it is broadcast. Listeners can even read the scripts and download the recorded interviews from the department's web page."

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Alberta AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Howell says delivering the program by mail was frustrating because of the long delay between producing the program and airing it. "The delay meant we couldn't be as timely with the content as we sometimes wanted. Our present system of satellite delivery, however, allows changes or additions to be made literally minutes before the program is received by the stations."

No matter the occasional frustration, Howell says Call of the Land has been a valuable resource to the agricultural community for half a century. "I feel the program provides a unique service in that it highlights what department staff are doing as well as publicizes department programs and policies. The calendar of upcoming events on the program has always been an invaluable way to keep the audience well-informed."

Further information on Call of the Land is available by calling Howell at (780) 422-3981, or e-mailing jack.howell@gov.ab.ca. Information is also available on Alberta Agriculture's website at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/newslett.nsf/homemain/cotl.

Contact: *Jack Howell*
(780) 422-3981

Spring fertilizer recommendations

Alberta farmers are increasingly relying on agronomists for recommendations on crop production management. They are looking for the latest information on topics such as new crop varieties, improvements in seed treatments, and the latest herbicides for weed control.

"Anyone looking for advice and assistance on crop production should make sure they are consulting qualified people," says Ross McKenzie, agronomy program leader, Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, Crop Diversification Centre South, Lethbridge. "Any agronomist giving advice to a farmer should either be a member of the Alberta Institute of Agrologists (AIA) or a certified crop advisor (CCA)."

Anyone that is a member in good standing with the AIA is a professional agrologist and will have the initials "P. Ag." after their name. A professional agrologist is someone who has graduated from a university with a recognized agriculture program. The AIA has a searchable database of its members at: http://www.aia.ab.ca/memberdb/dbidx.cgi.

Although many CCAs also have a degree from university or a diploma from college, they are not required to have one. However, a CCA must write and pass a series of exams in four major areas of crop production. The American Society of Agronomy administers the CCA program and lists all CCAs by geographic area on their web page at http://www.agronomy.org/cca/search_cca.html.

"Unfortunately, there are always a few unqualified people that will take advantage of the honesty of prairie farmers," says McKenzie. "This winter, a number of producers have received recommendations for either unusually high fertilizer rates or for fertilizers that likely will do little good to increase crop yield or quality."

McKenzie says to watch for clues that might indicate you are dealing with an unethical advisor:

- rather than using a soil-testing laboratory in Alberta, the advisor wants to send soil samples to a soil-testing lab in Eastern Canada or the United States. Unfortunately, these labs often do not use soil testing methods or fertilizer recommendation models that have been developed for the prairie soils of Western Canada.
- the advisor may recommend unusually high rates of common fertilizer nutrients or micronutrient fertilizers that have not been proven to be effective in the area

"These recommendations may not be wrong," notes McKenzie. "However, if the recommendations are quite different from what you have done in the past, you should seek a second or even third opinion. My advice would be to first contact the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677 for their advice. Next, I would talk to an industry agronomist from a fertilizer company. Companies such as Agrium, Cargill and Westco all have highly reputable agronomists on staff. Alberta soil testing labs such as Norwest Labs and Envirotest labs also have very knowledgeable professional agrologists available to provide informational support."

Bottom line, says McKenzie, is when in doubt, get another opinion. "There is no shortage of reputable, well-trained agronomists in Alberta who can provide additional information to you before you make your final fertilizer decisions for this spring."

Contact: *Ross McKenzie*
(403) 381-5842

Province's best 4-H speakers to compete at finals

Fourteen of 4-H's top public speakers will meet on April 5, 2003 at the provincial public speaking finals to compete for the opportunity to be named Alberta 4-H's best speaker.

"Two members from each of the seven 4-H regions qualify for provincials by speaking at a minimum of three levels of competition," says Mark Muchka, 4-H communications and marketing specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Finalists are given a general topic one week prior to the competition. They must write a four-to-six minute speech relevant to the topic as well as be prepared to give a two-to-three minute impromptu talk on a societal issue."

The winner receives an all-expenses-paid trip to compete at the Young Speakers for Agriculture competition at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto.

The provincial presentations competition is also taking place in conjunction with the provincial public speaking finals. The presentations competition sees participants give either a demonstration or illustrated talk on the topic of their choice. "This is the first-ever provincial competition of this type," says Muchka. "It was added in response to its growing popularity as a communication activity among 4-H members."

The general public is invited to attend either of the events. Competitions will begin at 1:00 pm on Saturday, April 5 at the Camrose Regional Exhibition. For more information on either event, contact Muchka at (780) 427-0753, e-mail: mark.muchka@gov.ab.ca

Contact: Mark Muchka
(780) 427-0753

Gold coin honours marquis wheat

The Royal Canadian Mint recently introduced its 2003 $100 14-karat gold coin, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the discovery of marquis wheat.

The coin unveiling took place at Indian Head Elementary School in Indian Head, Saskatchewan. The small western farming town of Indian Head was the first location to experience the phenomenal success of marquis wheat 100 years ago. It was also where the initial seed cross for marquis wheat - Canada's "golden grain" – was made.

"The Royal Canadian Mint is delighted to mark this important achievement on our 2003 14-karat gold coin," says Emmanuel Triassi, chairperson of the board of directors, Royal Canadian Mint. "Inspired by this year's agricultural theme, we are especially proud of the student outreach program we created to highlight the importance of coin themes and the events they represent."

The mint's outreach program, "Growing Collectors", also invites children to learn about the nutritional importance of wheat and the issues facing today's wheat farming communities. The mint and its partners will visit several schools across the country and chat with students about the importance of wheat, agriculture and the hobby of coin collecting. Partners in this program include the Canadian Wheat Board, agriculture in the classroom and breakfast for learning.

Artist Thom Nelson's coin design depicts a head of marquis wheat with a modern combine in the background. The sun-kissed or whitening effect that appears on the head of wheat was attained through a unique laser process and represents another innovative first for the Royal Canadian Mint. The obverse of the coin features a contemporary effigy of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II by artist Dora de Pédery-Hunt.

Contact: Brent Andressen   Lori McRae
(780) 427-4225   (780) 427-4582

Competitions as a publicity tool

Customer competitions are an innovative public relations tool that can be an excellent addition to any agribusiness' marketing mix. A competition can entice new customers, encourage current customers to try new things and generate word-of-mouth advertising. But where do you start?

"First step is to pick a theme for your competition," says Kerry Engel, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, farm direct marketing initiative, Westlock. "Your theme should reflect your business and your customers. Examples of competition themes include best patio or yard, or the biggest vegetable or sunflower. Cooking competitions, using ingredients from the sponsoring business, can be held for products like salsa, chili or soup. Cook-offs can extend themselves nicely into other promotions and events."

Writing competitions, especially those involving school-age children, can be very effective. "Let the kids tell you why their mom is the best cook in the world. You could get patriotic in your themes or use your competition to educate children about agriculture. Try tying your competition into the educational curriculum," says Engel.

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Writing competitions can also work well for adults. "Have your customers tell you, in 25 words or less, why they like shopping in your farmers' market or store. A random draw gets a gift certificate and you collect some great testimonials."

There are some important steps to be taken before launching any promotional competition:

- establish a set of rules and a judging criteria
- enlist some contest judges. These can include civil leaders, local experts, newspaper representatives or even customers
- look at the feasibility of establishing different contest categories. These can be based on age or sex, among other factors
- put together prize packages. Plaques or gift certificates from the sponsoring business are common awards

Engel says giving the prizes to the winners can be an excellent promotional opportunity in itself, especially if the local media can be involved. "Contact your local newspaper. Prepare a press release with a photo. However, make sure the article is not a blatant advertisement for your business; newspapers want human-interest stories."

Some other ideas:

- enlist local media as a sponsor
- look to suppliers and partners for other sponsorship opportunities. Unique sponsorship arrangements and cross-promotions help to extend promotional dollars
- use a competition as an opportunity to work with a local charity
- promote the competition through a variety of channels. Schools and associations are obvious outlets, as are youth organizations and garden clubs
- hang copies of contest stories and photos in the sponsoring business
- promote the contest in a newsletter, on the company website, as a "bag stuffer" or printed directly on bags or packaging materials

For more information on running a successful competition, contact Engel at (780) 349-4466, e-mail: kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
780-349-4466

ALERT line assists producers and their livestock

Alberta's livestock producers are renowned for their world-class production methods but many animal caregivers have been put to the test due to the rough weather patterns experienced in some areas of the province. "Last summer's drought and the severity of this late winter have had an impact," says Susan Church, manager of the Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) Association. "However, I'm confident producers are doing a great job despite the tough conditions."

"In Alberta we have a responsive livestock protection program that combines the efforts of the Alberta SPCA constables and the action line and resource team (ALERT) line," explains Church. She says anyone can call 1-800-506-2273 to report livestock in distress and contribute confidentially to a successful resolution. Extended drought and severe market constrictions have resulted in an increase in calls to the line over the past six months.

"AFAC has set up the livestock care response plan to secure feed, water and bedding in case of a livestock care emergency," explains Tim O'Byrne, livestock consultant, AFAC. "For the first time since it inception in 1994, the ALERT Line has received calls from producers themselves wanting assistance with their own livestock."

Through the plan, AFAC has been instrumental in helping producers faced with limited options when caring for their livestock. The livestock care response plan is activated when producers cannot meet their obligations to care for the animals. "We've had to dip into our feed supply a few times this winter," says O'Byrne.

Although cases of livestock neglect are rare in the province, there is a definite need for a watchdog especially when some producers have been forced to utilize options they've never used before. AFAC is aware of problems associated with lease agreements for distant cattle pastures. "Producers need to remain highly vigilant when they send their cattle off to be tended by someone else for months at a time," O'Byrne states. "Anything can happen out there; it's a lessee-beware market."

AFAC continues to work closely with the Alberta SPCA, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development and the RCMP to make sure that livestock in jeopardy are properly cared for. Anyone having a concern about livestock care can call the ALERT Line at 1-800-506-2273.

Contact: *Tim O'Byrne*
(403) 427-3266

Agri-News Briefs

Fruit growers give award of merit

The fruit grower's society of Alberta (FGSA) has presented their award of merit to Arden Delidais of Elnora. Delidais and her husband Dave own DNA Gardens in Elnora, specializing in prairie fruit plants and tissue culture technology. The award of merit is presented to an individual or orchard that has made significant contribution to the betterment of Alberta's fruit industry. The FGSA, established in 1981, represents growers, suppliers, researchers and processors. For more information on the award, call (403) 773-2489.

Olds College signs new block transfer agreement with U of A

A new block transfer agreement allows graduates from 20 different Olds College diploma programs to transfer into several BSc programs at the University of Alberta's Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics. "This is a huge opportunity for students who want to begin their post-secondary learning close to home or in a smaller community," says Bill Souster, dean of land, environmental and horticultural sciences, Olds College. "Students in this dual credential university pathway program will be able to get both a diploma and degree in four years." An official signing ceremony took place earlier this month at Olds College with the Honourable Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development in attendance. Students graduating from Olds College this spring can take advantage of the agreement this fall. For more information on Olds College, call toll-free at 1-800-661-6537 or visit the Olds College web site at www.oldscollege.ca.

Lakeland College announces new environmental/agriculture program

Beginning this fall, the Vermilion campus of Lakeland College will offer a new environmental program with an agricultural component. Integrated vegetation and conservation technology (IVCT) is a two-year diploma program that prepares graduates for careers in ecosystem conservation and resource management in areas where landscapes are impacted by industrial or agricultural operations. Graduates will have the skills to find employment as vegetation control technicians, pesticide application assistants, conservation agency technicians, municipal environmental coordinators and more For more information on the IVCT program, contact Stu Heard at (780) 853-8593 or visit the college's web page at www.lakelandc.ab.ca.

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Agri-News

April 7, 2003

Alberta maintains position as agricultural powerhouse

Even after the most severe drought in recorded history, Alberta's agriculture industry is maintaining its position as one of the agricultural powerhouses in the country, second only to Ontario.

"Clearly, Alberta has some of the most innovative and hardy farmers in the country," said Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "While they were suffering from one of the driest years on record, they still managed to maintain our position and even grow in some categories." McClellan was commenting on recently released Statistics Canada figures that complete the picture of the 2002 agriculture year.

While there were some declines, most notably in the crops sector, Alberta's livestock industry hit record levels in 2002. Beef production was at record levels, increasing to well over 800,000 tonnes of carcass and box beef. Dairy production also increased by five per cent, to $367 million in 2002. The crop sector was hardest hit by the drought, declining nearly eight per cent to $2.1 billion.

The food and beverage manufacturing industry remained Alberta's largest manufacturing sector at $9.8 billion, accounting for 24 per cent of the total provincial manufacturing shipments and employing nearly 20 per cent of all persons in the manufacturing sector in the province.

More information can be found on Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's web page at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/, under statistics.

Contact: *Reynold Jaipaul* *(780) 427-5376* *Terry Willock* *(780) 422-7683*

What's the difference?

One way to get farm-specific information about a new product or management practice is by testing it in a producer's own fields. But while on-farm trials can provide a lot of good information, they can also be dangerously misleading.

"There is no shortage of new ideas out there," says Ross McKenzie, agronomy program leader, Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, Crop Diversification Centre South, Lethbridge. "The farm press is constantly bombarding us with

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an array of new products and management practices. On top of that, there are all the ideas for improvement that crop up in a producer's own mind. Progressive farmers are constantly asking themselves if adopting a particular new practice will increase profit. To answer this question, they need information on how the new practice affects both yield and production costs."

McKenzie says while there are usually at least some research results to back up claims about new products or practices, this research doesn't tell an individual producer how well the product or practice will work on their own operation. "To get this farm-specific information producers can do a trial or experiment in their own fields," says McKenzie.

"If done correctly, these home-grown experiments can be building blocks towards good decision-making. But, if done poorly, they can mislead producers into making costly mistakes."

There are several keys to doing a successful trial, says McKenzie:

- keep it simple. The most basic on-farm trial has only two treatments; the new system, which includes the innovation, and the old system that does not. Resist the temptation to make a trial more complicated by using several different treatments of the new practice
- place the two systems side-by-side in a field with maximum edge contact between them. For example, results will be more reliable from long skinny treatments laid out side-by-side than from square plots with the same area
- use caution when looking at the results. It can be difficult making generalizations about a new practice when there are only small differences between trial results

"Statistics provide an objective basis for determining if real differences exist between treatments," says McKenzie "It's surprising how variable crop yields can be even across seemingly level, uniform fields. For example, if you harvest two equal areas of a wheat field, the yields will not be exactly the same. Almost everything that affects crop yield – sunlight, nutrients, water, temperature, weeds, disease, insects – changes from point-to-point across the field. When conducting a trial, the differences between treatments that arise from this natural variation are called experimental error."

Since this natural variability exists, it can be difficult to evaluate a practice based on a single trial. "Results from more than one trial are needed when comparing a new method with an old method; otherwise it's impossible to be certain if differences in a trial result come from the treatments themselves or from natural variation. Repeating a trial can help show what portion of the difference between treatments is actually a result of the methods used and what portion is experimental error. An experiment that is only done once cannot provide a reliable measurement of treatment differences."

Researchers overcome the problems of natural variation by repeating or replicating each treatment three or more times. Once complete, statistics can be used to analyze the results and an unbiased estimate of treatment differences can then be made. "Farmers and agricultural specialists must also take into account experimental error when conducting on-farm trials. Replicating helps minimize the risk of making a bad decision. The more times you repeat a trial, the more confident you can be that the results are accurate."

"So, when considering a new product or practice doing an on-farm trial can help you evaluate the effect it will have on your farm," adds McKenzie. "Remember to use long-narrow side-by-side comparisions. If you repeat the long-narrow strip treatments two or even three times it will go a long way to helping you decide if the new product or practice really works or not."

Contact the Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677 for more information on conducting on-farm trials.

Contact: Ross McKenzie
(403) 381-5842

Ag-Info Centre update

As of the beginning of February, 2003, the Alberta Ag-Info Centre in Stettler is fully staffed, with a complement of 13 specialists and four full-time resource agents. The Ag-Info Centre serves as the contact point for commercial agriculture inquiries from producers and others in the Alberta agriculture industry.

The resource agents answer the phone and provide information on services, programs and products. They also connect callers with appropriate Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development staff, including the specialists at the centre itself.

Specialists at the Ag-Info Centre are:

- beef/forage – Russel Horvey, Dr. Susan Markus, Bill Grabowsky, Dr. Juanita Kopp, Barry Yaremcio, Tina Orom and intern Jessica McNeil
- crops – Jay Byer, Karla Bergstrom, Kim Zeleny, Doon Pauly, and Rob Spencer
- new ventures – Kathy Bosse
- farm management – Dale Robinson

Beef/forage specialists provide expertise in animal management and nutrition, and forage agronomy and management, while crop specialists provide service in annual crop production, storage and marketing. New ventures specialist Kathy Bosse helps producers expand their current operations and assists with new business start up. Bosse is also an AVAC Ltd. liaison officer. Dale Robinson helps producers to improve the management of their existing operations.

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The recent addition of crop specialist Rob Spencer allows for enhanced service to producers of irrigated crops, particularly commercial horticultural crops, such as fruits and vegetables, greenhouse, turf, herbs/spices/medicinal plants, potatoes and nursery crops/woody plants/ornamentals. Spencer recently arrived from Saskatchewan, where he completed a BSA in horticulture. He is very near to completing a master's degree in plant sciences with a focus on the control of storage diseases of potato.

Contact the Ag-Info Centre for more information at 1-866-882-7677.

Contact: *Robert Spencer*
Ag-Info Centre
1-866-882-7677

Slow-cooker safety

"A slow cooker produces old-fashioned comfort foods like soups and stews," says Jane Carlyle, coordinator, food safety info line, Calgary. "However, used improperly, it can cause food to develop enough bacteria to make eaters sick."

Here are some tips on how to safely use this energy-efficient appliance:

- do not use a slow cooker for roasts or whole chickens. A slow-cooker heats food so slowly that bacteria could multiply
- always cut foods into small pieces
- fill the cooker no less than half full and no more than two-thirds full. Place slower-to-cook vegetables at the bottom and around the sides of the pot. Then add meat, cover all the food with liquid such as sauce, broth or water and cover tightly
- schedule permitting, cook on high for one hour, then reduce to low for the remaining cooking time
- only remove the lid to stir or check to see if cooking is complete
- if away during the cooking process when the power goes out, throw away the food even if it appears to be done. If at home, finish cooking immediately by some other means

For more information on slow-cooker safety, or answers to other food safety concerns, call the food safety info line at 1-800-892-8333 Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Information is also available on the food safety info line website at www.foodsafetyline.org.

Contact: *Jane Carlyle*
1-800-892-8333

Don't forget the calves' "sunshine vitamin"!

One of the most important requirements that a newborn calf has is the need for sunlight – and lots of it

"Since week old calves are trading upwards of $350 this year, it pays to keep them healthy, " says Susan Markus, beef/forage specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "Making sure these animals get lots of sunshine is a simple and effective way to help keep them healthy."

Newborn calves should have access to sunlight in order to synthesize vitamin D, known as the "sunshine vitamin", and enhance intestinal absorption, says Markus. This is especially important for calves with scours and a compromised gut function. In addition to acting as a hormone, the vitamin is needed for bone deposition of calcium and phosphorus. "Sunlight acts on sterols found on the skin and converts them to vitamin D through a series of biochemical reactions," says Markus. "If calves are housed indoors in confinement buildings and shielded from sunlight, this reaction cannot occur."

Some suggestions for calves sick with scouring:

- provide as much space per animal as possible to reduce contact between herd mates
- don't keep your sick calves locked up in a dark barn all day. Make sure there are windows and doors that allow sunlight to enter on the calf to help speed their recovery
- open up the windows as the glass blocks ultraviolet rays
- during the Alberta winter sunlight is more potent from 10 am to 2 pm than it is in the morning or evening. Ensure those sick calves get as much sun as possible (at least two hours per day) during this time

"Cattle do not store appreciable amounts of vitamin D, but will have some in the blood and liver. They are able to store a lot more vitamin A than vitamin D," adds Markus. "Ensuring calves with scours get enough sunshine is a vital link to their recovery."

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1-866-882-7677

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Last year for strychnine?

In February, 2003, Health Canada's pest management regulatory agency (PMRA) granted Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development a third consecutive, and probably final, emergency registration of two-per-cent liquid strychnine concentrate for the control of Richardson's ground squirrels.

"For most of the past decade, Alberta farmers have been besieged by Richardson's ground squirrels that have invaded all types of crops including pasture, forage, cereal and even oilseeds," says John Bourne, vertebrate pest specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vermilion. "Since the early 1990s farmers have been frustrated by the poor performance of ready-to-use baits in both protecting their property and keeping rodent numbers in check. Consequently, the range and overall population of Richardson's ground squirrels has expanded and increased significantly."

Bourne says this growth in numbers has resulted in damage that far exceeds that seen in the past. The rodents have not only invaded all field and row crops, but have become a serious urban problem in many areas as well. "Damage to crops and farmland includes trampling, consumption and destruction of annual crops as well as excavating and undermining already fragile surface soils with countless mounds and burrows, and exposing cropland to weed invasion and harmful wind and water erosion."

In 2001, Alberta Agriculture supported an emergency registration for the temporary return of liquid strychnine concentrate to manage an emergency ground squirrel situation. The current emergency registration, which will be the final one granted by the PMRA, is similar to the previous two where bait is prepared using farm-fresh grain and formulated by authorized municipalities. The expiry date is June 30, 2003.

"In spite of the successes we had using the product in 2001, the net benefit from the emergency label granted in 2002 was almost nil. That's because the concentrate was late arriving and there wasn't enough of it to do the job. The main problem with using strychnine is finding a regular and adequate supply of technical-grade strychnine for formulation into the two-per-cent product," says Bourne.

Despite its best efforts, Nu-Gro Corporation of Mississauga, Ontario (the company that makes the product used in Alberta) is unable to guarantee a reliable source for 2003. They cite declining international demand, regional market-access problems and trade-and-commerce restrictions as the main causes of the sharp decline in availability.

Although the emergency label is restricted for commercial agricultural use only, Alberta Agriculture has approved sale of the product to nearly all rural municipalities south of the Athabasca river. For further information on the emergency-use strychnine label and other alternatives to control ground squirrels, contact any municipal agricultural fieldman

Contact: John Bourne
(780) 853-8225

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Agri-News

April 14, 2003

April 30th deadline for enhanced crop insurance program

Alberta's farmers have until April 30, 2003 to purchase new, enhanced crop insurance for the 2003 growing season.

Recently announced changes to the province's crop insurance programs include new options to protect against the volatility of market prices, an expansion of the silage-greenfeed program and using cushioned yields in the calculation of risk-area normals.

"Changes made to the hay and pasture components were part of the crop insurance enhancements, and our early numbers show an increase of more than two million acres of pasture being covered for this season," said Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "We've given farmers the options they have been asking for, and I know they will like what they see and will respond by participating in the program."

The February 28 deadline for forage and pasture insurance has passed, but farmers who wish to cover their market and production risks for other crops should get in soon, according to Merle Jacobson, senior manager of insurance operations, Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC).

"There are significant changes this year that give farmers a lot more options in managing their risk," says Jacobson. "Crop insurance offices are swamped the week before the deadline, so we are advising our customers to get in early to make sure they get a full explanation."

Farmers can visit their local AFSC insurance office and have different scenarios presented to see which set of options work best for their operation.

Some of the more significant changes for the 2003 crop year include:

- spring price endorsement, which protects insured Alberta farmers against significant drops in market prices between the time seeding decisions are made and crops are harvested
- revenue insurance coverage, which sets a floor price to help producers offset the effects of long-term low-market prices
- enhanced risk area normal production, which now uses "cushioned yields" in the calculation of risk area normal yields to lessen the impact of low yields
- variable price benefit, which provides increased compensation to producers in a payment position if crop prices increase by more than 10 per cent during the year

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- silage/greenfeed insurance, in which silage can be insured under a weather-based program that pays on lack of moisture, or an area-based barley proxy program
- earlier forage and crop insurance deadlines, which have been moved to an earlier sign-up date to improve the financial soundness of the programs. The 2004 deadlines will be December 15, 2003 for forage insurance and March 31, 2004 for crop insurance

Farmers can call 1-888-786-RISK (1-888-786-7475) for information specific to the crop insurance changes or to find their closest AFSC insurance office. Information is also available from the AFSC website at www.AFSC.ca.

Contact:	Merle Jacobsen	David Hennig
	(403) 782-8229	(780) 422-7683

Water pumping program continues in 2003-2004

Alberta's water pumping program, which allows producers to rent water pumping equipment at reduced rates during times of water shortage, will continue in 2003-04.

"Although snow cover across most of the province has been better this year, the spring water supply for producers is being closely monitored. Securing long-term water supplies is an important strategy for producers to protect their operations from drought conditions," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Due to dry conditions, this is the fourth consecutive year that Alberta Agriculture has provided water pumping equipment at half the usual price. Last year about 800 clients took advantage of the program and rented water pumping equipment to fill their dugouts. Producers who are experiencing water shortages for livestock and domestic use will have priority for equipment use. Last year individual producers pumped an estimated 2.5-million cubic metres of water.

To obtain information and application forms for the water pumping equipment program, north of Airdrie call (780) 422-5000 and south of Airdrie call (403) 381-5730. Information is also available by going to the Alberta Agriculture web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca and clicking on engineering - water.

Contact:	Marshall Eliason	David Hennig
	(780) 427-4615	(780) 422-7683

Ground squirrel control - what to do?

The sighting of Canada geese or gangs of crows and emerging Richardson's ground squirrels (commonly known as gophers) heralds the unofficial arrival of spring in Alberta. Unfortunately, the return of gophers is also an ominous sign of potential problems to come for farmers and ranchers.

"Emerging male adult Richardson's ground squirrels precede females by about three weeks and immediately mark a territory that they will defend and use when mating with resident females during the brief breeding season," says John Bourne, vertebrate pest specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vermilion.

Bourne says that a single litter of five to seven blind, naked and helpless pups are born during mid-May to mid-June in an underground nursery chamber and will remain there for the next six-to-seven weeks. When about half-grown, the weaned juvenile rodents join their parents above ground gathering and eating native grasses and forbs, and invading and damaging nearby cereal and oilseed crops as well as forage and pastureland.

"Richardson's ground squirrels are social animals and tend to colonize in great numbers thus creating greater crop destruction, damage to farming equipment and potential risk of physical injury to grazing livestock," says Bourne. "Ground squirrel damage, particularly during conditions of heat and drought stress such as those recently experienced in Alberta, has resulted in devastating crop loss with very little recovery or salvage."

Bourne says that this year the rodents will be especially hard to control because the number one tool, strychnine, is all but virtually unavailable. International decline in strychnine use, regional strife where strychnine is harvested and stricter transport and commerce restrictions has resulted in extremely short supplies of the product.

There are several alternate products registered for ground squirrel control all of which are in good supply and available at most farm retailers, and hardware or horticultural centres says Bourne. Rozol®, a relatively inexpensive anti-coagulant concentrate, can provide effective control when mixed with fresh grain. However, like all concentrate rodenticides it is best to apply the bait as soon as possible after mixing. Rozol®'s downside is that a second application may be required to reduce the population sufficiently. For large area treatment, Rozol® is probably the most economical rodenticide to use.

Burrow Oat Bait (BOB) is a pre-formulated bait made with two-per-cent zinc phosphide (ZP) on slightly rolled, heat-treated oats. It has shown promise in the U.S. The garlic-like odour of BOB allegedly attracts ground squirrels and the stability of ZP extends its life in the field. "In the U.S., farmers and researchers

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alike claim best results come from pre-baiting for a week or so prior to bait placement. This means setting out untreated oats to condition the rodents before applying zinc phosphide bait," says Bourne. "As with all food-based poisons, put bait out as soon as possible to reduce competition from other natural food sources and before the juveniles emerge above ground. To prevent non-target exposure such as cattle, farmers can place baits in strategically located and well-anchored bait stations."

Several fumigants are also registered and work well on ground squirrels. However, because of their high cost they are usually only used when dealing with high-value crops, small areas or few rodents. Fumigants such as Woodchuck Bomb or Giant Destroyer are activated by being lit with a match and tossed into the burrow. The high heat and rapid burn of these pyrotechnics can be a fire hazard so caution in their use is highly recommended.

"EXIT® is a promising but unregistered fumigant that has shown itself to be quite safe and effective. It may prove very beneficial to farmers," says Bourne. EXIT® is a rapidly expanding foam made from safe, domestic components that when delivered into the burrow through a special aerated wand under low volumetric pressure quickly displaces available oxygen resulting in asphyxiation or drowning. EXIT® manufacturers expect the product and accompanying hardware will be registered very soon."

Bourne adds there are several other control agents, popularly toted as innovative alternatives, that are not registered because most have not demonstrated reliable and consistent performance, or are considered unsafe to workers or non-targets. These include various uses of anhydrous ammonia, acetylene-oxygen and other flammable gases.

For further information, contact any municipal agricultural fieldman or consult Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development's factsheet ***Control of Richardson's Ground Squirrel (Gopher) Damage*** (Agdex 684-2). This free factsheet is available on-line at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex3471 or from the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office by calling toll-free at 1-800-292-5697.

Contact: *John Bourne*
(780) 853-8225

2002 Alberta agri-food export highlights

Recent trade statistics show that Alberta exported $5.1 billion worth of primary and processed agricultural and food products in 2002. "This figure is 14 per cent lower than the record high of $6 billion reached in 2001," says Barbara Pekalski, trade research statistician, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Alberta's 2002 exports represented about 20 per cent of Canada's total agri-food exports of $26 billion. Alberta remains the second-largest exporter of agri-food products in the nation after Ontario."

In 2002, lower exports were recorded for both valued-added processed products and primary commodities, says Pekalski. Value-added exports fell about six per cent to $3 billion, while exports of animal and crops declined 23 per cent to $2.2 billion However, the proportion of value-added exports as a percentage of Alberta's total agri-food exports grew from 52 per cent in 2001 to about 58 per cent in 2002. Conversely, the proportion of primary commodities exports fell from 48 per cent to 42 per cent in 2002. Severe drought conditions in the province and low supplies of crops contributed to the overall decline in exports.

"Exports of grains and oilseeds suffered the most from last year's drought," says Pekalski. "Wheat sales dropped 26 per cent to $845 million, and barley exports at $61 million were half of their 2001 levels. Canola seed exports fell almost 29 per cent to $315 million due to tight supplies and reduced exports to China and Mexico. Japan remained Alberta's major export market for canola seed and the only market reporting an increase. Among other exports, dry peas dropped to their lowest level ever, down 88 per cent from $103 million in 2001 to $13 million in 2002. While exports of major crops posted declines, hay and fodder exports continued a steady upward trend reaching a record $95 million. As well, exports of potatoes, at $27 million, more than doubled from a record low $13 million in 2001."

In the livestock sector, exports of live cattle (excluding purebred) and hogs were down from the record high in 2001. The 2002 value of exported cattle fell 11 per cent to $634 million while the quantity remained virtually unchanged, down less than half of one per cent. "Following two years of growth, exports of live hogs declined 39 per cent to $76 million with quantity down 24 per cent. Lower hog prices, high feed grain prices and an abundant supply of hogs in the United States contributed to the decline," she says.

Exports of value-added products such as beef and pork dropped in value while quantity rose. Exports of beef fell four per cent to $1.6 billion with quantity up three per cent. "This was the first decline in the value of exported beef in the last decade," says Pekalski. "Beef exports to Japan dropped significantly from $126 million last year to $67 million in 2002. Partially offsetting the Japanese decline were higher exports to South Korea and Taiwan. Despite the decline, beef remains Alberta's number-one export product for the fourth consecutive year."

Pekalski says pork export revenue decreased 13 per cent to $191 million, while quantity rose just over five per cent. Horsemeat exports were down 21 per cent from a record high $65 million in 2001 to $52 million in 2002, with quantity down 24 per cent

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On the positive side, Pekalski notes that increases were posted in exports of many value-added products:

- processed meat, led by cured pork, continued to recover at $23 million
- oat groats and meal, rolled oats, wheat meal and bakery products led exports of milled cereals and cereal preparations. Exports of bakery products reached $38 million, compared to $8.0 million five years ago
- exports of processed potatoes, consisting mainly of french fries, grew substantially from $14 million in 1998 to $173 million in 2002
- prepared animal feed exports continued to grow steadily reaching $44 million in 2002
- stuffed pasta led food products by increasing sales 250 per cent
- honey exports reached a record high of $16 million, which is more than triple last year's low of $5.2 million. Strong honey prices, higher exports to the U.S. and lower Chinese exports all contributed to the increase

The top five export markets for Alberta's agri-food products in 2002 were the U.S., Japan, Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan. Exports to these markets totalled $4.3 billion, representing almost 84 per cent of Alberta's total agri-food exports. Among the top five markets, Taiwan was the only market reporting an increase over last year.

- exports to the U.S. declined seven per cent to $3 billion, due mainly to lower sales of live hogs and cattle, pork, wheat, oats and canola seed. Nonetheless, the U.S. remained Alberta's number-one export market, accounting for 59 per cent of total agri-food exports in 2002
- exports to Japan, Alberta's second largest market, were down about five per cent to $745 million as a result of much lower exports of beef, processed forages and canola oil. Increases were reported in exports of canola seed, wheat and hay
- exports to Mexico, the third largest market, fell 16 per cent to $346 million, after posting a record high in 2001. The decline resulted from lower sales of beef and canola seed. Beef exports fell from a record high of $219 million in 2001 to $197 million in 2002
- exports to South Korea and Taiwan ranked fourth and fifth largest in 2002, worth $92 million and $82 million, respectively. Exports to South Korea were down two per cent while exports to Taiwan grew 37 per cent
- China, formerly the fourth largest market in 2000 and 2001 and historically the third largest, ranked sixth in 2002. Exports to China fell to the lowest level ever, down 76 per cent to $68 million, due to substantially lower exports of wheat, barley and canola seed

"Overall, 2002 Alberta agri-food exports posted declines in all major trading regions except for Eastern Europe, Africa and Oceania," adds Pekalski. "Exports to Asia fell 21 per cent and exports to the Middle East region dropped almost 77 per cent. Substantially lower exports of wheat contributed to these declines."

Contact: Barbara Pekalski
(780) 427-5386

4-H advocate receives national award

A past member of the Alberta 4-H Council and 4-H Foundation has been named as one of the 73 recipients of the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award. Jerry Hall of Calgary was recently presented with the award by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada.

"Jerry has been an active volunteer whose practical approach, leadership skills and knowledge of business have been important assets to the 4-H program," says Ted Youck, member of Jerry Hall's nominating committee and former head of the 4-H branch, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "His warmth, positive attitude and willingness to "roll up his sleeves to get the job done" inspires everyone he meets."

Youck says Hall has always shown a special interest for 4-H public speaking and has judged at numerous competitions. He played a significant role in creating positive working relationships with other 4-H partners and has worked extensively on fundraising activities and the promotion of 4-H in general.

"Through his local, regional and provincial involvement, Jerry has encouraged young people to participate in their communities," adds Youck. "In addition to his involvement with 4-H, Jerry has been a member of the Rural Education Development Association (REDA) and the Goldeye Foundation.

The Governor General's Caring Canadian Award honours Canadians for unpaid, voluntary contributions, most often behind-the-scenes at the community level. These individuals have given extraordinary help or care to individuals, families or groups, or supported community service or humanitarian causes. Recipients usually have been involved in these activities for several years and normally have not received a national or provincial honour.

Contact: Mark Muchka
(780) 427-0753

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Agri-News Briefs

Visions 2003 conference

The Alberta Agricultural Economic Association (AEHA) is holding the ***Visions 2003 Conference -Trade, Value and Risk Issues Affecting Agriculture in Alberta*** at the Black Knight Inn, Red Deer, on May 1-2, 2003. Sessions include value chains and processing in agriculture, emerging trade issues and ongoing disputes, and risk management in agriculture. Early registration by April 25, 2003 is $135. Late registration is $150 or $55 for students. One-day and banquet registrations are also available. For further information, contact Reg Norby at (780) 436-0590, email norby@shaw.ca, or go to the AEHA webpage at www.aaea.ab.ca.

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Agri-News

April 21, 2003

Seed crops early for highest yield

"Generally early seeding is desirable for crops in all regions of Alberta," says Murray Hartman, oilseed specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe. "This is especially true in short frost-free areas because of the risk of fall frost damaging yield and quality, and in arid areas where high summer temperatures adversely affect flowering/heading and seed development."

However, he says there is also a downside. "Early-seeded stands are often thinner due to frost mortality or cold soil conditions. Both of these can result in increased instances of seedling disease. Also, under cold soil conditions, crop seedlings compete poorly with weeds due to their slowed growth."

Hartman says that the optimum seeding date depends on many factors, such as:

- the earliest date that the field can support tractor traffic. This depends on the amount of snow and runoff, soil texture, spring precipitation and temperature, slope, residue, etc
- the weather pattern for the growing season. This includes the date of the last lethal spring frost and first fall frost, precipitation amounts and timing, and temperature patterns, especially heat stress during flowering and pod-filling periods
- the timing of disease, weed or insect outbreaks
- weed control methods
- maturity of different crop species/varieties
- farm and equipment size

"Over the last decade agronomists have changed their seeding date advice from recommending a soil temperature target to recommending seeding as soon as the field can support traffic," says Hartman.

"The Alberta management insights program summarizes agronomic data from crop insurance records," says Hartman. "This data clearly shows that seeding early in Alberta produces the highest yield."

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's web page shows this seeding-date-to-yield data for 1999-2001 for six crops in the different soil zones. The actual weekly seeding pattern is also shown for each crop, so producers can see the "normal" date as well as how many manage to seed early. The data may be seen at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/crop5757.

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AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Hartman says time and spring weather usually prevent farmers from seeding every crop and field early. As such, producers must choose which crops to seed first. The seeding date – yield curve data for the various crops can help producers decide which is the most profitable planting sequence for their farm.

To use the seeding date yield information most effectively, Hartman says producers should consider the following:

- the effect the seeding date had in each year of the soil zone in question. Did the yield decline consistently in each year after a certain week? Is there an initial time period where yield does not fall?
- the yield loss per week after any initial plateau
- whether the grower is aiming for higher grades. For example, consider when edible peas or malt barley are being seeded as compared to the feed grades. Early seeding will help to achieve the higher grades if the planned seeding date is compatible with the crop maturity requirements and the typical local growing season.

"Take a look at the loss in revenue per week, taking into account both yield loss and the expected price of the grades the grower is aiming for," says Hartman. "Crops that lose the most revenue per week are the strongest candidates for early seeding." As well, he cautions against reading too much precision into weekly yield differences. "Remember that the ends of the curves have the least precision since they are based on the least number of records. Large changes at the ends of a curve should be disregarded."

All-in all, Hartman says early seeding gets a big thumbs-up. "Early seeding is a good management practice that improves yield and quality without extra cost."

Contact: Murray Hartman
(403) 782-8024

Pepino Mosaic Virus alert for greenhouse operators

Pepino Mosaic Virus (PepMV), a highly infectious viral disease of tomato, has recently been confirmed in at least two commercial greenhouses in Alberta.

"At this time, we don't known how the virus arrived here, but possibilities include infected tomato fruit or seedlings from out-of-province, or inadvertent introduction via contaminated tools, equipment or clothing," says Dr. Ron Howard, plant pathologist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Crops Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "The virus can be very easily spread mechanically, so growers should avoid handling PepMV-infected tomato plants and fruit, as well as virus-contaminated equipment, to reduce the risk of infesting their own greenhouses."

To date, PepMV has not been a problem on greenhouse crops other than tomato. The disease does not affect the edibility of tomato fruit; however, depending on the severity of infection it may reduce yield and quality.

Howard says the most striking symptoms of Pepino Mosaic on tomato plants occur on the leaves. "Characteristic symptoms of this disease include stunting of the head of the plant, yellow or dark-coloured spots on leaves, brown streaks on stems and flower clusters, and marbling of fruit." A detailed description and colour pictures of this disease are included in the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) factsheet entitled ***Management of Pepino Mosaic Virus in Greenhouses.*** This factsheet is available at www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/crops/facts/01-017.htm.

"It is important to prevent the introduction of Pepino Mosaic to a greenhouse by using disease-free seed and transplants and non-infested equipment," says Howard. "To minimize the risk of spread and carryover of PepMV in greenhouses where the disease already occurs, it's essential to practice strict hygiene at all stages of crop production and to thoroughly clean-up between crops. As well, the OMAF factsheet mentioned above provides detailed information on ways and means to manage Pepino Mosaic through cultural practices."

Alberta Agriculture staff are attempting to pinpoint the number of PepMV-infected greenhouses in the province to stop the disease being spread beyond these operations. Specialists will help growers to identify the disease and, if confirmed, will recommend control practices suited to those individual greenhouse operations. Commercial tomato growers who would like to have their crops examined or tested for PepMV can contact one of the following specialists to make arrangements:

Dr. Ron Howard (Brooks)	(403) 362-1328
Dr. Nick Savidov (Brooks)	(403) 362-1312
Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza (Edmonton)	(780) 415-2303)
Jim Calpas (Edmonton)	(780) 422-4911)

Contact: Dr. Ron Howard
(403) 362-1328

Reducing weed-control costs in a direct-seeding system

Keeping a lid on input costs is always a major concern. Dollars spent on fertilizers are dollars well-spent - if there is rain. But the second most costly input is often weed control.

"The biggest part of a weed-control budget in a direct-seeding system often goes to getting a handle on wild oats," says Nick Underwood, agronomist, reduced tillage linkages, Grande Prairie. "In my view, there is a way to reduce wild oat control costs substantially by changing seeding and harvest times."

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Underwood suggests the following

- seed a quarter section either to barley for silage or to oats for greenfeed
- don't use any wild oat herbicide; the whole wild oat plant will be taken off before the seeds have shed
- harvest the crop by late July or early August
- leave a stubble height of five or six inches. A post-harvest application of glyphosate may be a good idea
- seed winter wheat in the last week of August (or the first half of September if in central Alberta). Seed shallow at a depth of one inch or less. Winter wheat growers have found that the stubble is important to help winter survival

"The winter wheat should have three leaves at freeze-up," says Underwood. "If it does, then next spring you will have a crop that will be way ahead of spring germinating wild oats and other weeds."

Another option is to grow fall rye. "It's an even better competitor with weeds because it has some allelopathy that discourages the growth of competing plants. However, check out the markets before making a decision as the market returns for fall rye may be less attractive than those for winter wheat."

While Underwood says this procedure isn't new, he thinks it is an idea whose time has come again. "The Canadian Wheat Board is slowly improving the pricing options for winter wheat varieties that meet certain standards. Not all winter wheat varieties meet their standards, so careful selection is required. In the northern part of the province CDC Osprey is perhaps your best bet."

Underwood also suggests a pre-seed burn-off and a heavier seeding rate for those planning on seeding short-season barley or oats for forage. "Doing this can give your crop a serious advantage. You maybe pleasantly surprised at the weed control that you get and the money you save."

"Another idea is to contact Ducks Unlimited," adds Underwood. "They may be able to provide advice on winter wheat as well as possible assistance."

Contact: Nick Underwood
(780) 814-1232

Orion teen named province's best 4-H public speaker

Colin Haugan, an eighteen-year-old from Orion and a member of the Shortgrass 4-H Beef Club, has won the title of Alberta's best 4-H public speaker. Runner-up honours went to Ashley Fox of Hay Lakes while Kim Mortreuil from Strathmore placed third.

The trio were among 14 of 4-H's top public speakers who met on April 5, 2003 at the Camrose Regional Exhibition for the 2003 provincial 4-H public speaking finals. Two members from each of the seven 4-H regions qualified for the provincial finals by speaking at a minimum of three levels of competition. Each provincial finalist had two weeks to research and prepare a four-to-six minute speech on the topic of creativity and innovation. They were also required to give a two-to-three minute impromptu talk.

"Speeches were thoroughly researched and well-presented, and the impromptus were outstanding," comments Mark Muchka, 4-H communications and marketing specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Haugan's speech on enhancing the building blocks of life discussed aspects of the education system and focused on how students should be encouraged to use their creativity rather than just learning concepts and facts."

As the provincial public speaking winner, Haugan will travel to Toronto in November 2003 to compete in the young speakers for agriculture public speaking competition at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. Cat Country's *Agritalk* radio program sponsors airfare to-and-from the competition, and Alberta Friends of National Public Speaking provides accommodation and meals.

Sponsored by Agrium and the Camrose Regional Exhibition, the 2003 provincial 4-H public speaking finals were a big success. "All speakers exhibited a high level of skill and poise," says Jim Fisher, host of *Agritalk*, Drumheller. "The communication skills participants learn in 4-H will serve them well in their careers and personal lives."

More information on 4-H is available from their website at www.4h.ab.ca or by contacting the provincial 4-H office toll-free at 310-0000, (780) 422-4444.

Contact: Mark Muchka
(780) 427-0753

New AFAC board executive

The Alberta Farm Animal Care Association's (AFAC) elected executive officers following the group's annual general meeting on March 27, 2003 are:

- chairman Aart Okkema who has represented the milk producers on AFAC' s board for four years. He is also a board member of Alberta Milk and is chairman of Western Dairy Science Inc. He runs a dairy and purebred Black Angus operation at Vermilion. Contact: (780) 853-2569
- vice-chairman Karl Chomlak who has represented the Alberta Pork producers on AFAC's board for the past seven years. He has a farrow-to-finish and beef cow/calf operation at Beauvallon, east of Two Hills. Contact: (780) 366-2269
- board executive Greg Ruzicka. He represents the Wild Rose Equine Ranching Association and farms close to 2,000 acres in the Viking area. Contact (780) 336-2224

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All three AFAC board executives are response team leaders for AFAC's animal care ALERT line (1-800-506-2273) and sit on the Alberta livestock protection system management group. As well, Okkema, as AFAC chairman, will be on the Alberta/Canada livestock welfare research partnership.

The directors-at-large on AFAC's board are Guy Paris of Rimbey, representing the Alberta Auction Markets Association and new member Dr. Craig Wilkinson, director of animal care at the University of Alberta.

Formed in 1993, AFAC has a broad membership including livestock organizations, individual producers, processors, veterinarians and associated agri-businesses. Through AFAC, the livestock industry of Alberta works together to:

- promote responsible animal care
- talk with the public about today's animal agriculture
- participate in issues and legislation affecting livestock care
- encourage relevant research

Further information on AFAC is available from Susan Church, manager, AFAC, by phone at (403) 932-8050 or fax at (403) 932-8052.

Contact: *Susan Church*
(403) 932-8050

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Agri-News Briefs

Nominations open for Canada's outstanding young farmer

Canada's outstanding young farmers program is designed to recognize and profile young farmers that exemplify excellence and innovation in their profession and who demonstrate leadership in the agriculture industry. Nominees are judged by:

- progress made in their agriculture career
- environmental and safety practices
- crop and livestock production history
- contributions to the well-being of the community, province and nation

To qualify, any individual or organization can nominate a farmer or farm couple who is between the ages of 18 and 39 years and are farm operators, deriving a minimum of two-thirds of their income from their farm operations. The Alberta/N.W.T. regional event will take place July 4-6, 2003 in Lethbridge. One farmer or farming couple will be selected to represent the region at the national awards program in Vancouver from December 4-6, 2003. For more information, call 1-866-695-7532 or visit www.oyfcanada.com.

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Agri-News

April 28, 2003

Using annual cereals as a forage source

Many cattle and forage producers suffered major losses of their traditional feedstuffs during the 2002 drought. This year, some producers are considering using annual cereals to supplement their main forage program for pasture and their fall and winter feeding programs.

"There are many advantages to using annual cereals as a forage supplement," says Bill Grabowsky, beef specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Stettler. These include:

- readily available and reasonably priced seed
- the superior drought-tolerance shown by some varieties
- being able to use traditional seeding equipment
- crops that are easy to establish, providing there is some rain
- feed generally being of high quality
- producing crops that can be grazed, silaged, baled dry as greenfeed or as wet baleage
- being able to swath-graze crops

"Crops may be seeded anytime during the regular growing season. Fall-planted cereals are generally limited to winter cereals and are planted in early August. Earlier spring seeding is generally better than late because it allows the plants to capture and utilize more moisture and to enjoy longer growing days," says Grabowsky. "Spring-planted cereals like barley, oats, wheat and triticale are "one shot" crops. However, they usually produce more plant biomass than winter cereals like fall rye, winter wheat and winter triticale."

The winter cereals produce for two seasons (i.e. the year they are planted and then the following year). Spring cereals used for grazing usually peak in production by mid-June whereas winter annuals spread out their production from mid-summer to late fall and then into the next year when they head out.

"For the most part, try to graze spring cereals during their vegetative (pre-heading) stage if they are to be used for feed," says Grabowsky. "Both spring and winter cereal crops produce high-quality feeds when they are in this vegetative stage."

If you are picking spring cereals for total biomass production, Grabowsky recommends selecting varieties that yield the most grain as they will produce the most forage. These crops can be selected from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's ***Varieties of Cereal and Oilseed Crops for Alberta: 2003*** publication.

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Alberta
Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

Grabowsky notes that spring and winter cereals can be be planted alone, combined or intercropped. Annual legume crops like peas and fababeans can be intercropped with spring cereals. Annual grasses like Italian Ryegrass or Westerwold can also be used as stand-alone crops or intercropped with spring cereals. Warm season crops like corn, sorghum-sudan grass and millet may also be used but these crops require higher temperature to grow and fully develop to their potential. These crops tend to do well in the hotter and drier areas of Alberta.

As for seeding rates, Grabowsky advises using the normal seeding rates and dates to grow an annual stand-alone crop for emergency pasture. "However, if the crop is a winter annual, seed at 1.5 to 2.0 bushels per acre. If the annual cereal crops are combined or intercropped, seed at the rate of 20-30 pounds of oats or barley and 100-110 pounds of the winter annual. Fertilize according to soil tests."

Producers can minimize potential problems with these annuals by keeping a watchful eye on them. "Producers may encounter grass tetany, ergot poisoning, pneumonia, nitrate poisoning and possible grain overload with certain crops. Also, try to seed smooth awned barley varieties if the intended crop is going for silage, greenfeed or swath-grazing."

Grabowsky says fall rye is one of most consistent winter annuals for a winter carryover crop. "Producers using spring cereals who looking for stocking rates grazed under average fertility and precipitation can get 2.0 to 2.5 animal unit months (AUM) per acre in the black and grey soils or 2.0 AUM per acre under dark brown soil conditions. Spring and winter cereals can begin to be grazed when the plants reach six inches or when the drill rows cannot be seen. Keep these crops in the vegetative stage for best results."

"Annual cereal crops offer flexibility and many options for cattle producers," concludes Grabowsky. "If you are planning to grow any of these crops be sure to manage them so they can compliment your perennial pastures or winter feeding programs. If they are to be grazed, remember to rotationally graze the stand and give them a rest period. If these crops are to be taken off for silage, harvest the crops at the proper stage and moisture content."

The free factsheet ***Varieties of Cereal and Oilseed Crops for Alberta: 2003*** is available on-line at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex4069 or from the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office by calling toll-free at 1-800-292-5697.

Information on other available crop-related factsheets is available at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex3882.

For more information on using annual cereals as a forage source contact the Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.

Contact: *Bill Grabowsky*
Ag-Info Centre
1 866 882-7677

Comprehensive nutrient management

Nutrient management refers to managing the amount, source and placement of manure in crop production. The new ***Agricultural Operation Practices Act*** legislation includes a major focus on nutrient management and establishes a basis for manure to be managed as a crop nutrient.

"We are working towards managing manure through a systems approach based on five interrelated fundamentals that together are referred to as comprehensive nutrient management (CNM)," says Dr. Mohamed Amrani, nutrient management specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "This means that a producer will not only be thinking about issues surrounding manure application, but all parts of the manure production and management system itself. This is a holistic approach to nutrient management – one that continually evaluates new research and new management options to help producers build truly sustainable systems for the long-term."

The five key parts in a CNM system are:

- a feeding strategy, which may be the best solution to some manure management problems. Improved efficiency of protein utilization would allow the same or increased productivity with a lower dietary protein (nitrogen) concentration, and reduce nitrogen excretion
- manure storage and handling. Producers need to find ways to reduce nutrient losses from manure during storage and handling
- land application. Manure should be applied based on agronomic requirements, which means applying only as much as is needed for cropping purposes and not more
- land management. Conservation techniques or practices can be used to reduce erosion, runoff, and overall impact of manure application record keeping. CNM requires that records be kept for all parts of the manure production and usage system

"We hope more producers will realize how much they can benefit from a comprehensive approach to nutrient management. Looking at manure production and usage as a complete system gives producers more control and management options," says Amrani. "Some producers have adopted this holistic, proactive approach to manure management as well as the higher standards that are now in place for the entire industry."

The current edition of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's ***The Standard*** newsletter contains an article entitled ***Nutrient Management: An Opportunity in Alberta's Environmental Legislation***.

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The article is available on the internet at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/newslett.nsf/homemain/stan.

For more information regarding the ***Agricultural Operation Practices Act***, or to receive a copy of ***The Standard***, contact Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 3rd Floor, 4920 - 51 Street, Red Deer, Alberta, T4N 6K8, or phone (403) 340-5359, fax (403) 340-4896 or e-mail: cfoinfo@gov.ab.ca.

Contact: Mohamed Amrani
(780) 422-9236

Thawing foods safely

"When frozen food thaws and any part becomes warmer than 4°C (40°F) any harmful bacteria that may have been in the food before freezing will start to multiply," says Jane Carlyle, co-ordinator, Food Safety Info Line, Calgary.

Carlyle recommends several safe ways to thaw food:

- the safest methods to plan ahead and defrost food in the refrigerator. Cook within two days
- seal food in a leak-proof package or plastic bag and place in a sink of cold water, changing the water every 30 minutes. Refrigerate thawed food; cook immediately
- defrost food in the microwave, following the manufacturer's directions; cook immediately

"Only food defrosted in the refrigerator can be refrozen without cooking. Even then there will be some loss of quality," says Carlyle.

If food in the freezer thaws accidentally, Carlyle says it is safe to refreeze if the temperature in the freezer has not risen above 4°C (40°F) or if the food still contains ice crystals. "Evaluate each item separately being particularly careful with meat, poultry and fish products and any food that contains milk, cream, sour cream or soft cheese. Accidentally frozen canned foods can also be a safety risk."

For more information on thawing foods safely, or answers to other food safety concerns, call the food safety info line at 1-800-892-8333 Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Information is also available on the food safety info line website at www.foodsafetyline.org.

Contact: Jane Carlyle
1-800-892-8333

Farm tours as diversification option

Increasing numbers of farm operators across North America are now offering tours to school-aged children as part of their marketing mix.

"When we say school tours, we mean experiential, for-profit, customized education programs," says Kerry Engel, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, farm direct marketing initiative, Westlock. "Today's school tours offer a variety of components that create value for the student and teacher. Hands-on activities, a take-home component and "fun" are the elements of a successful farm school tour."

Engel says there are a lot of children in the province who fit in the age bracket for school tours. "For example, enrollment in kindergarten to grade three in just the Edmonton public school system is about 14,000 students. This doesn't include the Edmonton catholic school system, surrounding school systems in greater Edmonton and area, playschools, day-cares, summer programs, home-schooling associations, mothers' groups or children in grades four to six."

Proper market research is necessary to find out what potential customers want, says Engel. "According to Susan Marchand and Linda Wellings of Shelburne Farms, you need to connect with schools and their curriculum. They suggest that to find out what teachers want invite them to your farm for a visit and tour of your facilities," she says. "Arrange a meeting with teachers to brainstorm curriculum-based ideas for programs at your farm. You can also recruit a friend or family member who teaches school to help you prepare."

Shelburne Farms also notes that successful school tour ventures have developed objectives for their field trips. Engel says entrepreneurs must decide what they want children to learn at their farm and then connect it to the curriculum. School-tour-operator farmers use a variety of teaching methods including hands-on, discovery-based, interactive and interdisciplinary learning activities.

Engel says possible hands-on activities include:

- planting or harvesting
- going on a hayride
- visiting a hen house
- learning how a windmill works
- feeding ducks
- playing on a wooden tractor
- making a scarecrow

Tours can also include written and verbal presentations, a take-home coloring book and fresh from-the-farm products.

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"Programs need to be relevant to the students' own lives," adds Engel. "If possible, divide classes into small groups (ten children to one adult). Be flexible and have fun. Children will learn the most when they are having fun."

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4466

Brown evergreens???

The warmth of spring can cause evergreens to brown, especially after a mild winter. This browning affects the appearance and growth of the highly prized evergreens, and, in severe cases, can kill them.

"Browning can be very selective where it appears on the tree or shrub. It can occur on a few branches at the top or sides, on one side or on the entire tree," says Shelly Barkley, information officer, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Crops Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "Each evergreen will respond with different colours; for example, cedar leaf scales will fade from green to light tan or reddish-brown, and the branches or branchlets of junipers will turn brown or orange. The needles of spruce and pine turn brown although Colorado blue spruce can turn a purplish-brown."

Winter drying of needles occurs in warm winters as moisture is continuously being lost through the needles and cannot be replaced because the roots are in an inactive state. Winds, whether warm or cold, will suck the moisture from the needles. Sometimes the snow cover line may be noticeable since the snow offers protection from drying. On warm, sunny winter days, radiation from the sun or reflection from snow and light-coloured building can increase the leaf temperatures to 20 C over air temperatures. This will cause the moisture in the stems and branches to become exhausted.

"Careful pruning is needed to restore the form of the evergreen; however, first make sure what is dead and what is going to grow," says Barkley. "If the soil in the root zone is dry, give the plant a good soaking as that will prevent further drying damage. Fertilize lightly, if at all."

Barkley adds that the best way to control browning is through prevention. "Keep evergreens well-watered during the spring and summer but be careful not to drown them. Keep the plants pest free. Water the plants late in the fall to ensure the plant is as pumped full of water as possible."

Local garden centres can provide information for gardeners. Also, information on yard, garden, turf, shrub and tree care is included in the Alberta Agriculture publication, ***Alberta Yards and Gardens: What to Grow***. This book contains information to help Albertans successfully grow ornamental trees and shrubs, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Cost of the publication is $15 (plus GST). Copies are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000-113 street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697. Please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping-and-handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted. This publication may also be ordered on-line at https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/app08/pps/order/orderitems.jsp.

The free factsheet FS275/07-1 ***Browning of Evergreens*** is available on-line at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex4144, by writing the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000-113 street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697.

Contact: *Alberta Agriculture Publications Office*
1-800-292-5697

Mexico border clearances made easier

With most agricultural tariffs removed effective January 2003, the Mexico market is more attractive than ever before. Even so, having someone ensure paperwork is in order before shipping can avoid problems at the border.

"In September 2001, Luis Pérez was appointed the border clearance representative stationed at Laredo/Nuevo Laredo," says Marcia O'Connor, trade director for Mexico and Latin America, Alberta Economic Development, Edmonton. "His job is to consult with agri-food exporters prior to shipping their product to ensure that paperwork is in order and to troubleshoot at the border if a shipment is held up for any reason." This service, available to all Canadian agri-food exporters entering the Mexico market, will be funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada until March 31, 2004.

Luis Pérez has been active assisting with a variety of products including pork, processed meats, beef, dairy, seed potatoes and genetics, as well as answering questions and finding contacts such as freight forwarders or brokers. He also works closely with the Canadian Embassy and directs some inquiries to them if they are outside of the agri-food area.

To date, O'Connor says Pérez has dealt with products delayed at the border due to problems concerning:

- health certificates
- manufacturer's declarations
- certificates of origin
- packaging and labeling

"Mexico was Alberta's third largest agri-food export market in 2002 with exports valued at $346 million," says O'Connor. "With a predominantly youthful population of nearly 100 million people and a growing middle class, Mexico represents a market with significant opportunity for Alberta agri-food products and services."

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O'Connor says that while export growth of Canadian bulk and intermediate agri-food products have remained relatively flat between 1996 and 2002, exports of consumer-oriented products have continued to escalate. "During the period 1996-2002, Canadian consumer-ready exports increased 463.5 percent to US $311 million. Value-added exports increased 135 per cent in 2000, compared to a 25 per cent increase in primary commodities. Value-added food products account for over 50 per cent of Alberta's agri-food exports to all markets."

O'Connor notes that when exporting value-added and processed products, documentation and labeling can be complex. Multi-ingredient products or multi-product shipments can be delayed at the border if the paperwork doesn't conform to Mexican regulations. "Having a resource like Luis Pérez available to assist Alberta and Canadian exporters is valuable," adds O'Connor

Prior to shipping, Alberta agri-food exporters can contact Pérez by telephone at (011-52) (867) 719-00-03, cellphone at 1 (956) 206-8771, fax at (011-52) (867) 719-07-64 or email at luispere@nlaredo.globalpc.net.

For more general inquiries, contact Marcia O'Connor by telephone at (780) 422-1762 or by email at marcy.oconnor@gov.ab.ca. O'Connor can also provide details on the services provided through the recently opened Alberta trade office in Mexico City.

Contact: *Marcia O'Connor*
780) 422-1762

Agri-News Briefs

Greenhouse open house at the Crop Diversification Centre South

The greenhouse crops program at the Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks, is holding an open house May 13, 2003 to showcase their 2003 research projects. The event will highlight various trials including the precision placement of liquid CO2, alternative substrates for hydroponic culture of greenhouse vegetable crops, and using a product called Root Shield for control of pythium in cucumbers. There is also an evaluation of a new production system called aquaponics that is based on recycling nutrients produced by fish to grow vegetables without the use of synthetic fertilizers. There is a $10 registration fee that includes lunch. The day gets underway at nine a.m. Register by April 25 by contacting Pat Cote by phone at (403) 362-1316 or by fax at (403) 362-1306. The Crop Diversification Centre South is located south of the Trans Canada Highway, three kilometres east of Brooks.

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Agri-News

May 5, 2003

Alberta prepared for West Nile virus

The Government of Alberta has unveiled its West Nile virus response plan for 2003 under the direction of the Provincial Health Office.

Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Alberta Environment and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development have developed a plan to co-ordinate activities to monitor and test for West Nile virus in the province, as well as to communicate with the public and health professionals about the disease.

The response plan builds upon last summer's plan and is revised based on the experiences of other provinces and the United States.

"There was no evidence of West Nile virus in Alberta in 2002," says Gary Mar, Minister of Health and Wellness. "Over-wintering mosquitoes that will be appearing soon in Alberta will not be carrying the disease. While we will likely find evidence of the disease in the province this year, our experts expect it will only appear in birds or perhaps in horses."

Other than two Albertans infected while traveling outside Alberta, there has been no evidence of the disease in Alberta to date. Ontario and Quebec both reported human cases of West Nile virus last summer. Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan also confirmed evidence of the disease, but reported no human cases. The risk of getting West Nile virus in Alberta remains low. "Even in other provinces where the virus is present, a small percentage of mosquitoes will carry the virus, and only a small number of people bitten by an infected mosquito will develop serious illness," said Dr. Nicholas Bayliss, provincial health officer.

Dr. Bayliss also offers a caution. "We are concerned about the rare but serious long-term effects of more severe West Nile infections. Those potential serious effects will make it important for Albertans to take steps to protect themselves from mosquito bites when the virus does appear."

A public information campaign will begin in May to educate Albertans about West Nile virus and offer practical advice on steps people can take to avoid mosquito bites, the most effective means of reducing the risk of infection.

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Under the plan, the province, in conjunction with municipalities, has developed a mosquito surveillance program to learn more about the province's mosquito population and to detect the disease. The Provincial Laboratory of Public Health will also provide results on tests of human samples within one week.

The Provincial Health Office has developed an education program to inform physicians about West Nile virus and reporting requirements for the disease.

West Nile Virus: Alberta's Response Plan (2003) and other information about West Nile virus can be viewed on the Alberta Health and Wellness Web site at www.health.gov.ab.ca.

Contact: Dr. Nicholas Bayliss (780) 427-5263 John Tuckwell (780) 427-7164

Soil pH and plant nutrients: what's the connection?

"Farmers frequently ask me what effect soil pH has on availability of nutrients in the soil," says Ross McKenzie, agronomy unit leader, Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, Crop Diversification Centre South, Lethbridge. "There is no simple answer to this question, since the effects of soil pH are complex and vary with different nutrients." However, says McKenzie, there are some broad generalizations producers should keep in mind when making nutrient management decisions.

Soil pH or soil reaction is an indication of the acidity or alkalinity of soil and is measured in pH units. The pH scale goes from 0 to 14 with pH 7 as the neutral point. As the amount of hydrogen ions in the soil increases, the soil pH decreases thus becoming more acidic. From pH 7 to 0 the soil is increasingly more acidic and from pH 7 to 14 the soil is increasingly more alkaline or basic.

Using a strict chemical definition, pH is the negative log of hydrogen ($H+$) activity in an aqueous solution. "The point to remember from the chemical definition is that pH values are reported on a negative log scale," says McKenzie. "Therefore, a one-unit change in the pH value signifies a 10-fold change in the actual activity of $H+$."

To put this into perspective, says McKenzie, a soil pH of 6 has 10 times more hydrogen ions than a soil with a pH of 7, and a soil with a pH of 5 has 100 times more hydrogen ions than a soil with a pH of 7. Activity increases as the pH value decreases. Agronomists generally use soil pH as measured in a 2:1 water-to-soil mixture as an index of a soil's acidity or alkalinity.

Plants can take up nitrogen (N) in the ammonium (NH_4^+) or nitrate ($N0_3^-$) form. At near-neutral pHs (pH 7), the microbial conversion of NH_4^+ to nitrate (nitrification) is rapid and crops generally take up nitrate. In acid soils (pH less than six), nitrification is slow and plants with the ability to take up NH_4^+ may have an advantage.

Soil pH also plays an important role in volatization losses, says McKenzie. Ammonium in the soil solution exists in equilibrium with ammonia gas (NH_3). The equilibrium is strongly pH dependent. For example, if NH_4^+ were applied to a soil at pH 7, the equilibrium condition would be 99 per cent NH_4^+ and one per cent NH_3. At pH 8 approximately 10 per cent would exist as NH_3.

"What this means is that a fertilizer like urea (46-0-0) is generally subject to higher losses at higher pH. But it doesn't mean that losses at pH 7 will be one per cent or less," says McKenzie. "The equilibrium is dynamic. As soon as a molecule of NH_3 escapes the soil, a molecule of NH_4^+ converts to NH_3 to maintain the equilibrium. However, bear in mind that there are other factors such as soil moisture, temperature, texture and cation exchange capacity that can effect volatilization, so pH is not the whole story. The important point to remember is that under conditions of low soil moisture or poor incorporation, volatilization loss can be considerable even at pH values as low as 5.5."

As well, says McKenzie, soil pH is also an important factor in the N nutrition of legumes. "The survival and activity of rhizobium, the bacteria responsible for N fixation in association with legumes, declines as soil acidity increases. This is the particular concern when attempting to grow alfalfa on soils with pH below six."

The form and availability of soil phosphorus (P) is also highly pH dependent. Plants take up soluble P from the soil solution, but this pool tends to be extremely low, often less than one lb/ac. The limited solubility of P relates to its tendency to form a wide range of stable minerals in soil.

Under alkaline soil conditions, P fertilizers such as mono-ammonium phosphate (11-55-0) generally form more stable (less soluble) minerals through reactions with calcium (Ca). "Contrary to popular belief, the P in these Ca-P minerals will still contribute to crop P requirements. As plants remove P from the soil solution the more soluble of the Ca-P minerals dissolve and solution P levels are replenished," says McKenzie. "Our greenhouse and field research has shown that over 90 per cent of the fertilizer P tied up this year in Ca-P minerals will still be available to crops in subsequent years."

The fate of added P in acidic soils is somewhat different as precipitation reactions occur with aluminum (Al) and iron (Fe). The tie-up of P in Al-P and Fe-P minerals under acidic conditions tends to be more permanent than in Ca-P minerals.

Fixation of potassium (K) and entrapment at specific sites between clay layers tends to be lower under acid conditions. "This is thought to be due to the presence of soluble aluminum which occupies the binding sites," says McKenzie.

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"One would think that raising the pH through liming would increase fixation and reduce K availability. This is not the case, at least in the short-term. Liming increases K availability likely through displacement of exchangeable K by Ca."

The availability of the micronutrients manganese (Mn), iron (Fe), copper (Cu), zinc (Zn), and boron (B) tend to decrease as soil pH increases. The reasons for this differ for each nutrient, but can include:

- formation of low-solubility compounds
- greater retention by soil colloids (clays and organic matter)
- conversion of soluble forms to ions that plants cannot absorb

Molybdenum (Mo) behaves counter to the trend described above. Plant availability is lower under acid conditions.

So, concludes McKenzie, soil pH does play a role in nutrient availability. "You should be more aware than concerned about this on your farm. Keep the pH factor in mind when planning nutrient management programs. Also, keep historical records of soil pH in your fields. Soils tend to acidify over time particularly when large application of NH_4^+ based fertilizers are used or there is a high proportion of legumes in the rotation. In recent years we have noticed the pH decline is occurring more rapidly in continuously cropped – direct seeded land. On the other hand, seepage of alkaline salts can raise the pH above the optimum range. So, a soil with an optimum pH today may be too acidic or alkaline a decade from now depending on land management."

Contact: *Ross McKenzie*
(403) 381-5842

Tips for increasing farmers' market sales

"At the recent Explore Direct Conference held in Red Deer 74 per cent of participants surveyed a plan to increase the percentage of revenue their farm/business generates from farm direct-marketed products over the next three years," says Kerry Engel, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, farm direct marketing initiative, Westlock. "But how do you increase sales at farmers' markets?"

Engel says someone with some good answers to this question is Gail Hayden, executive direct of the California Farmers' Markets Association, who suggests the following:

- provide top-quality customer service. Greet customers and say "see you next week," when the sale is complete. Learn to recognize regular customers and learn their names. Use the same staff each week to help build relationships with customers
- limit the time customers spend waiting-in-line. Hire additional staff if necessary
- develop effective sales techniques
- be on time for the market. Late vendors lose money
- eat and smoke away from the stall. Customers often judge the product by the seller
- offer samples, recipes and tasting. This encourage existing customers to buy more

"Many of our markets develop campaigns to bring in customers throughout the season. Choose a theme and promote it through press releases, posters, and postcards to market patrons," suggests Engel. "Theme ideas can come from anywhere. How about having a guest chef promote five-a-day fruit and vegetable school lunches and snacks? Or hold a farm day or earth day to support sustainable agriculture? Harvest or berry festivals are also great ways to celebrate a new season at the market."

Another option is to hold a tasting or demonstration. "Have customers taste and compare strawberries, tomatoes or cucumbers," says Engel. "Pick a product that is in-season and have a demonstration booth. Go "grill-crazy" with a barbecue demonstration, "stir-it-up" with stir fries, cocoon with "soup days" or get patriotic with "red-and-white-berry Sunday" on Canada Day."

For more information on farm direct marketing contact Kerry Engel, farm direct marketing initiative, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development at (780) 349-4466. For more information on the Alberta's farmers' market program contact Penny Wilkes, farmers' market specialist at (780) 427-4514.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4466

Research benefits feed barley

A recent economic study finds that Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's feed barley research program has contributed over 100 million dollars in monetary benefits to Alberta farmers since its inception in 1973.

The study, completed by Joseph Nagy of Nagy International, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, concludes that the benefits of the feed barley research program compare very favorably with that of other Western Canadian agricultural research and development programs.

"The economic advantages were calculated based on the yield benefits of the barley varieties developed by the program over the check varieties," says Bill Chapman, cereal specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Barrhead.

Program successes include:

- Tukwa, a variety released by the program in 1992, that averages 10.1 per cent higher grain yield than the check variety. It also has 4.2 per cent better yield-loss avoidance over the check because of its improved disease resistance

Cont'd on page 4

- recently released varieties that have shown even larger yield advantages over varieties produced earlier by the program. For example, Vivar, released in 2000, has a 24 per cent yield advantage over the check and an 11.5 per cent better yield-loss avoidance. Like Tukwa, Vivar also has better disease resistance than the check variety
- silage yield improvements ranging from 0.6 tonnes/ha over the check varieties for Empress, the first variety released from the program, to 4.0 tonnes/ha for Tukwa

Alberta Agriculture established the Field Crop Development Centre (FCDC) at Lacombe in 1973 with Dr. James H. Helm heading up the research and development program on feed barley. "Nagy's review of this program calculated the incremental benefits, in constant 2001 dollars, for the high-yielding and disease-resistant barley varieties released by the program since 1973, to be $109.4 million," says Chapman. "In addition, Nagy estimates the value of advancements in silage production made possible through research conducted under the program at $24.2 million."

Nagy then compared the total cost for the barley research program from 1974 to 2001 ($8.6 million dollars in constant 2001 dollars) with these calculated benefits to produce a cost-benefit figure. "This figure showed an internal rate of return for the program of 29 per cent," says Chapman. "This rate compares very favorably with that of other Western Canadian agricultural research and development programs."

Chapman says there are other benefits of the program that were not included in the report. "Nagy's study did not take into consideration all the benefits of the FCDC barley research program such as the gains made in early maturity and lodging resistance, or the value to the livestock industry of developing high-nutritional quality feed barley which has been one of the primary goals of the program."

Currently, there are over 30 scientists and technical staff at the FCDC who are involved in the feed barley research program. Barley research objectives are to:

- improve disease resistance (scald, net blotch, smuts)
- improve agronomics (high yield, early maturity, lodging resistance)
- improve feed quality

The feed barley research program is part of the Alberta/Canada Barley Development Agreement. The Alberta Barley Commission has contributed funding and research direction since becoming a partner in the agreement in 1996.

Contact: Bill Chapman
(780) 674-8258

Handling a ham

Hams come in many shapes, sizes and varieties. It is because of this variety that consumers are frequently confused about them, says Jane Carlyle, coordinator, Food Safety Info Line, Calgary

"Most hams are fully cooked," says Carlyle. "Hams labelled as fully cooked or ready-to-eat can be eaten cold straight from the package. Alternatively, you can heat the ham at 325°F (160°C) until a food thermometer inserted in the centre of the thickest part measures 140°F (60°C). A five-to-eight lb. (two-and-one-half-to-four kg) boneless half-ham will take one-and-a-half to two-and-one-quarter hours to heat."

Carlyle advises that cook-before-eating hams (fresh cured ham) should be cooked at 325°F (160°C) until a food thermometer inserted in the meat measures 160°F (71°C). She also suggests glazing rather than basting during the last hour of cooking.

She says it's also important to make sure a ham remains fresh. "Many feel that because a cured or smoked ham is preserved it can be handled differently than raw meat. But hams are perishable and must be handled correctly," says Carlyle.

She advises that:

- consumers look for a best-before date on fully cooked unopened vacuum-sealed hams or keep refrigerated as long as two weeks
- fully cooked store-wrapped whole hams can be kept seven days or, if cut in half, three-to-five days
- fully cooked ham slices and cook-before-eating hams can be kept three-to-four days
- ham may be frozen for one-to-two months

For more information on cooking hams safely, or answers to other food safety concerns, call the food safety info line at 1-800-892-8333 Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Information is also available on the food safety info line website at www.foodsafetyline.org.

Contact: Jane Carlyle
1-800-892-8333

Agri-News Briefs

Upcoming symposium on digestive physiology in pigs

The 9th International Symposium on Digestive Physiology in Pigs (DPP 2003) is being held May 14 to 17, 2003, at the Banff Centre for Conferences in Banff. Topics on the agenda include new methods in digestive physiology and metabolism research, gut immunology and microbiology, and enhancing intestinal function. Registration cost for the symposium itself is $500. A discounted student rate is also available. There are also post-symposium workshops available at $80 for those who attended the main symposium or at $120 for those who did not. Prices do not include GST. For more information, contact the Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutritional Science, University of Alberta, 4-10 Agriculture/Forestry Centre, Edmonton, AB, T6G 2P5, phone (780) 492-3651, fax (780) 492-5771, email info@dpp2003.ca, or visit the symposium webpage at www.dpp2003.ca.

Provincial Black Knot of Prunus disease survey

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development research staff are conducting a provincial survey of Black Knot Disease (*apiosporina morbosa*) in wild and cultivated plantings of *prunus spp*. (plum family) in Alberta. The survey, directed by Dr. Ron Howard of the Crop Diversification Centre South, is designed to increase the understanding of the distribution and economic impact of this disease and to assist in the development of improved management practices to help control it. The survey will examine prunus plantings in rural and urban areas (non-garden), including orchards, amenity plantings, parks, boulevards, research collections, nurseries, natural areas, arboreta and shelterbelts. Anyone interested in participating in the survey, either by having their plantings surveyed or by conducting the survey on eligible plantings themselves (a kit will be provided), can contact Dr. Ron Howard at (403) 362-1328 (dial 310-0000 first for toll-free access) or Rob Spencer at the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.

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May 12, 2003

Top 4-H teen receives Premier's Award

The highest honour bestowed by Alberta's 4-H program has been presented to Danielle Schnurer. Danielle was chosen as the Premier's Award Recipient from 133 of the province's top 4-H members during the annual 4-H Selections Program at Olds College, May 2 to 5, 2003.

"This individual is an outstanding example of why Alberta's agriculture industry is among the best in the world," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "The future of our agriculture industry is our youth and the 4-H program is one of the reasons why the outlook of our industry is so bright and full of potential."

Danielle, a 17-year-old high school student from Elk Point, has excelled in Alberta's 4-H program. Danielle demonstrates the leadership, communication and personal development skills that the 4-H program holds in high regard. For the last eight years, Danielle has been an active member of the Elk Point Saddle Slickers and Elk Point Multi clubs, and has held positions at the executive level. She has also been an avid participant in various regional and provincial 4-H activities.

In addition to the Premier's Award announcement, 53 4-H Ambassadors were also selected to represent 4-H at major educational programs throughout Canada and the United States over the next 12 months.

4-H is Alberta's longest-running rural youth program. More than 8,000 members and 2,600 leaders participate in 442 clubs across the province. For more information, visit www.4h.ab.ca or contact the provincial 4-H office at (780) 422-4444.

Contact: *Marguerite Stark* *Terry Willock*
(403) 948-8510 *(780) 422-7683*

$12-million business incubation facility to open in Leduc

A new $12-million business incubation facility will help take Alberta's value-added food processing industry to new levels of success, helping entrepreneurs make the transition from product development to the market place.

The facility will house a food processing business incubator that will help start-up companies move from product and process development to the establishing of their own facilities.

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The incubator will be built beside the Food Processing Development Centre in Leduc and will be managed by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

"We know that more than 80 per cent of companies that grow in business incubators succeed," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "This facility will give Alberta's emerging entrepreneurs the resources they need to succeed in the market place by providing dedicated production facilities, business-planning guidance, and access to industry expertise."

The new facility will also house the Centre for Agri-Industrial Technology (CAIT), an existing research centre that focuses on the non-food use of agricultural commodities. The work done at CAIT responds to a growing worldwide emphasis on using agriculture products to manufacture nutraceuticals, industrial products and health-care products.

The initiative will be funded jointly by AVAC Ltd. and Alberta Agriculture. Aaron Falkenberg, chairman of AVAC Ltd., says enhanced incubation capacity fits within AVAC's mandate of accelerating agrivalue in the province. "Agrivalue is made up of those industry initiatives and commercial successes that enhance the value of agricultural commodities. AVAC supports this incubator project because it contributes to that and to the industry's potential of reaching $20 billion in value-added production and $10 billion in primary production by the year 2010," he says.

Contact:	*Ron Pettitt* *(780) 980-4862*	*Terry Willock* *(780) 422-7683*

Business success: it's about the customer, not the product

"To paraphrase management guru Peter Drucker, the only purpose of a business is to create delighted customers and the reward for doing so is profit," says Karen Goad, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, farm direct marketing initiative, Grande Prairie. "Agri-preneurs who keep the consumer in their marketing plans are usually more profitable than those who don't. Consumer-focused operators believe that marketing is producing what people want to buy and that customer service is exceeding their customer's expectations consistently, constantly and systematically."

Goad says that delighting customers is about more than simply solving their problems. "It is knowing each customer better than anyone else knows him and going the extra step to surpass his expectations every time," she says. "John Stanton, professor of food marketing at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, advocates this type of exceptional customer service in his book, *Delight Me ... The Ten Commandments of Customer Service*."

Stanton suggests business operators should:

- get to know their customers
- give customers something they wouldn't normally expect to receive
- log every customer interaction. Stanton believes much can be learned from these
- ask ex-customers why they have stopped doing business with the company
- never forget that the company needs to be loyal to the customer and not vice-versa
- post the company mission statement so everyone can read it and then live up to it
- remember that customers consider all companies they think can solve their problems, and will go with another company if they aren't happy
- borrow successful ideas from others
- tell customers when their business is really appreciated
- never become complacent. Exceptional customer service is like a race with no finish line

"John Stanley, a respected international marketing consultant and workshop leader at the recent Explore Direct conference, says that to grow market share and delight your customers a new approach to customer service is needed," says Goad. "He believes you need to think for your customers."

Stanley suggests several strategies to use to think for customers and to surpass their expectations:

- display products in a way that makes sense to the customer. If running a farm store with a bakery section, locate the ice cream case right next to the fruit pies. Put the yogurt cooler beside the fresh berries
- provide team training on how customers think and what information they need. Don't assume customers know more than they do. Keep in mind that men and women buy and think differently
- provide customers comfort or reassurance on signage. Signs like "best seller," "back by popular demand" and simple purchase or preparation tips all provide reassurance

Goad says another idea is to hire passionate people to provide passionate service. She cites Pete's Frootique, a fruit and vegetable shop in Halifax, N.S. as an excellent example. Shop owner Pete Luckett looks to develop several attributes in his employees:

- attitude and personality – Luckett advises hiring people with the attributes and attitudes required for the job. For example, if he needs to hire morning people, he holds job interviews at 6:00 a.m.
- knowledge – includes providing ongoing product knowledge training

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- confidence – Luckett believes that a person with the right attitude, personality and product knowledge enjoys building relationships with customers. They are naturally confident and enjoy the experience
- personality – includes encouraging team members to dress up for events and to provide ideas on how the business can be improved

"Basically, Luckett believes in empowering his employees," says Goad. "He invests the time and money to build a great team and then empowers the members to make decisions."

Bottom line, says Goad, is for agri-preneurs to make sure they know what their customers really want. "Talk to them, listen to them and observe their behaviour. Take their perspective, not yours. If you continue to delight them, they'll never let you go!"

More ideas on running a successful agri-business are available from ***The Alberta Agri-Preneur***. This newsletter provides timely, incisive and creative ideas for agriculture entrepreneurs. ***The Alberta Agri-Preneur*** is available free of charge. Contact the Westlock Office of Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development at (780) 349-4466 (dial 310-0000 for toll free service.) or e-mail kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca to be added to the mail list.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4466

Maintaining healthy trees

Pruning is done to maintain healthy trees. Diseased wood can be a source of infection that can move through the tree while dead wood attracts both insect and other diseases.

"Pruning shapes and controls the size and spread of a tree, removes broken branches and prevents weak crotches that are subject to breaking under fruit or snow loads," says Shelley Barkley, information officer, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "Pruning also promotes flowering and rejuvenates old shrubs."

When wounds are made, trees produce a callus to cover the wound. If the wound isn't covered before disease sets in, the tree forms compartment walls. These walls stop the spread of disease into the tree. As trees vary in their ability to compartmentalize, Barkley suggests those pruning make the smallest wound possible to encourage speedy callus formation.

"It's important to understand how the tree reacts when pruned," says Barkley, "Tree branches grow longer from the bud at the end of the branch; this bud is dominant over all the other buds on the branch. When the terminal bud is removed, a near-by bud is then forced to take the lead. New branches grow in the direction the terminal bud points, so cutting to an outward-facing bud forces plant growth outward."

When a plant or tree is cut back severely, the nutrients that had sustained the entire length of that branch are now more than is needed. The plant directs these extra nutrients into new vigorous-growth areas like water sprouts and suckers. This results in the plant setting fewer but healthier flower buds that produce large flowers. This can be an advantage when trying to grow prize-winning flowers.

"When pruning, leave the branch collar intact on the tree," says Barkley. "The branch collar is the swollen area at the base of the branch where it comes off the trunk or another branch Begin pruning trees while they are young since the wounds callous faster and there is less stress to the tree."

Pruning is usually done in the dormant season in March and April, says Barkley. Chinook days in January or February are also good for this task, as is early summer when the goal is to invigorate tree growth. Spring or summer pruning dwarfs growth. Pruning in late summer (July and August) forces the tree to grow rather than harden properly for winter, and this can increase the chance of winterkill. Fall pruning can lead to winter damage to the cambium tissue around the pruning wound. Some trees are "bleeders" (birch and maple) meaning they have a very high sap pressure in the spring. These trees need to be pruned once the tree has leafed out in late May or June.

"When pruning, visualize the shape of the plant at maturity as pruning will enhance or detract from the natural shape of the plant," says Barkley. "Start by removing the dead, damaged and diseased wood. These can be done at any time. Sometimes this is all that needs to be done to improve the appearance of the tree and promote a healthier plant."

Make clean cuts and leave no stubs, says Barkley. "Make cuts above a bud that is growing in the direction you want the branch to take. To choose the correct angle, place the pruning tool so that the top of the cut is slightly above the top of the bud and the bottom of the cut is even with the bud's bottom."

Barkley advises following a three-step procedure when large limbs need to be removed:

- cut from the underside halfway through the branch a foot or so out from the trunk
- make a second cut top-side of the branch, a couple of inches out from the first cut. This cut should go through the branch, removing the weight from the branch and stopping the bark from tearing
- remove the tub, leaving the collar in tact on the tree trunk

"Prune spruce and pine when the candles are actively growing, in late May or June," adds Barkley. "Break off a portion of the new year's growth. This forces the tree to make more new buds for next year thus producing a bushier tree. Removing branches can be done the same as with deciduous trees. Remember, the buds that can still grow are limited in evergreens and removing wood older than two-years old can leave permanent holes in the tree. Shape shade trees early by removing unwanted lower branches, crossed bunches and those growing in the wrong direction or location."

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Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has a priced publication available entitled ***Pruning in Alberta***. This book shows how to control and maintain trees and shrubs without distorting their natural form and beauty. Cost of the publication is $3 (plus GST). Copies are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000-113 street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697. Please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping-and-handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted. This publication may also be ordered on-line at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex22.

Contact: *Alberta Agriculture Publications Office*
1-800-292-5697

Farming the chemical program trap

"By now all of the manufacturers have updated chemical retailers and farmers with their latest product selection and customer savings programs," says Karla Bergstrom, crop specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Stettler. "Many farmers and retailers dislike these product programs; however, they are here to stay. These programs are a useful way for chemical companies to collect information for their marketing strategies as well as a way for them to focus on specific markets."

Bergstrom says these programs often include various terms such as:

- "sign-up before this date"
- "call-in to register"
- "qualify from previous program"
- "buy this minimum"
- "top-up only on these specific products"
- "rebate based on the lesser value"
- "virtual packs"
- "up-front discounts"

"The intent of these programs is to influence producers towards the particular company's product line and to reward them for their level of support. But following these programs may not always be in the producer's best interest," she says.

Rather than fitting their farms into a chemical program focusing on short-term savings, Bergstrom says producers should be using sound agronomic practices by applying the best chemistry for each field situation. "The farming the program trap can introduce more concerns on their farms, and management of these new concerns can be costly."

She says there are some important issues to consider when deciding on a chemical program, especially in a year following a drought. These include:

- herbicide residue – producers should focus on fields where group two, three and four products were applied, as drought conditions will lengthen their degradation in the soil. Abundant spring moisture can activate herbicides in the soil and can potentially cause injury to susceptible crops. To reduce risk of crop injury, check the label of the herbicides used for further information, follow the re-cropping restrictions, talk to the manufacturer and watch soil pH, organic matter and moisture levels
- group stacking – If producers have used group two products for multiple years, their effects may be additive and may show up more after a dry year. Producers can bioassay soil if they are concerned with re-cropping, or they can plant a non-sensitive crop
- herbicide group planning – herbicide-tolerant canola systems can be a vital part of managing herbicide rotation. For example, if Odyssey is to be used on peas then avoid the Clearfield canola system

"The primary herbicides used on cereals are groups one and two, so rotating to herbicide-tolerant canola systems can also introduce groups nine and ten to the herbicide mix," she says. "The old adage of "why change a good thing" will not always be the case with over-reliance on a pesticide group".

Bergstrom adds that the bottom line is to always follow good agricultural practices when planning a chemical program, and, if a chemical savings program fits, consider it a bonus. For more information, contact the Ag-Info Center at 1-866-882-7677.

Contact: *Karla Bergstrom*
1-866-882-7677

Food preservation workshops to be held across prairies

An upcoming series of workshops looks at proper food preservation techniques and their importance in ensuring a safe, wholesome and quality product for the consumer.

"Food preservation was matter of survival for our grandparents," says Jane Carlyle, coordinator, Food Safety Info Line, Calgary. "Recently, home food preservation has been enjoying a resurgence among consumers. Unfortunately, few of today's consumers grew up cooking, much less preserving food at home."

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Carlyle says the three-hour workshops will highlight home food preservation methods such as canning, pickling, jams/jellies and dehydration. Participants will:

- gain a science-based understanding of the importance of putting into practice the current best practices for food preservation, including the prevention of foodborne illness and the ensuring of the long-term quality of the preserved food
- understand the microbiology behind food preservation
- be updated on the best practices for home canning jams and jellies, pickles, fruits, vegetables, soups, meats, fish and ethnic specialties
- learn what can occur when safe practices are not followed
- find out the facts surrounding home food dehydration

Carlyle says the workshops will be conducted by a team of experts in food safety and food preservation including:

- Gary Dmytrow, a food engineering technologist with TanRin Food Consulting, who has worked closely with the Canadian food processing industry, as well as federal and provincial governments
- Dr. Rick Holley, University of Manitoba, who is a specialist in food dehydration
- Judy Kingry, Bernardin Ltd, who is an expert on the best practices for canning jams, jellies and pickles

The workshops will be held at the following dates and places:

- Winnipeg, Monday, June 9, 2003, 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the University of Manitoba, Agriculture Building, Carolyn Sifton Auditorium, Dafoe Street, Winnipeg, MB
- Saskatoon, Tuesday, June 10, 2003, 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., at 2C01 in the College of Engineering, 57 Campus Drive, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK
- Calgary, Wednesday, June 11, 2003, 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, Heart Building, C Wing, Room MC317, 1301 – 16 Avenue, Calgary, AB
- Vancouver, Thursday, June 12, 2003, 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., at Simon Fraser University Harbour Centre, Labatt Hall, Room 1700, 515 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC

The fee for participants is $40.00. Workshop materials will be available for each participant. To register phone the Food Safety Info Line at 1-800-892-8333.

Contact: Jane Carlyle
1-800-892-8333

Agri-News Briefs

Sheepstakes 2003

Sheepstakes 2003 will be held June 6 - 7, 2003 at the North Country Recreational Complex in Picture Butte. Highlights include a trade show, ongoing demonstrations, sheep competitions, a market competition, and more. The event wraps up with a lamb barbeque. For more information, call Frances Pittman at (403) 757-2395.

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May 19, 2003

Incorporating manure into a direct seeding system

One of the most frequently asked questions about direct seeding is how to use livestock manure without incorporating it into the soil.

"Generally, manure is a disposal problem more than it is a crop nutrient," says Ron Heller, reduced tillage agronomist, Alberta Reduced Tillage Linkages, Vermilion. "Of course, it has value as a soil amendment in that manure spreading returns organic matter and nutrients to the field."

There are two traditional reasons for working manure into the soil:

- to reduce odours (mainly ammonia release)
- conventional seeding

"It's not uncommon for manure to be spread on pasture and hay fields, although more careful spreading and perhaps even harrowing may also be necessary," says Heller. "The main concern, especially with large quantities of fresh solid or liquid manure, is where and when to competently dispose of it. Manure storage, handling, and application don't come without cost, can be a nuisance, and sometimes can even cause environmental problems. If you expect to use the manure as a crop nutrient as well you can run into even more problems"

Heller says any increased soil fertility in the year of manure application should be seen as a bonus. As nutrient loss in manure begins even before it is moved to the field, it is hard to know how much nutrient value a manure source actually contains. Depending on the condition of the manure it may not contain a lot of nutrients, and tilling it into the soil may have little actual beneficial effect.

"Although soil nutrient testing is important, organic matter is the key to soil quality. Growers who use livestock manure on their fields will likely maintain and improve their soil quality beyond those who continually deplete organic matter through tilling and exporting it as grain, straw, feed and fodder," says Heller. "While field spreading and incorporating raw manure into the soil may be beneficial in some cases, there are other alternatives. Injection of liquid manure with low soil disturbance works, and composting solid manure or feeding cattle in the field reduces handling. Direct seeding, for one, is intended to handle increased crop residue and surface trash (organic matter). With direct seeding you don't have to till the manure into the soil to reap its benefits."

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Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@gov.ab.ca

Another alternative is to change spreading habits to allow for less tillage. Fields can be rotated for use as disposal grounds if every field isn't needed every season. "If getting the manure into the soil seems essential, only till that portion of the cropland where it is being added. This leaves the rest of the farm available for direct seeding," says Heller. "With planning, the benefit of manure can be spread over the whole farm and not just on the same nearby fields year after year".

Alberta's new ***Agricultural Operation Practices Act*** contains specific requirements for manure management. Heller says this means producers need a good understanding of manure composition and nutrient content and that soil testing, record keeping and application rates restrictions now apply in some cases. "In general, manure incorporation within 48 hours is called for, but there is a clear exception for frozen or snow-covered ground as well as forage and direct-seeded croplands. An important guide for direct seeders is to observe the setback distances from water bodies and slope adjustments to ensure they do not create a risk to the environment when applying manure. This should be seen as common sense."

Heller says it makes sense to include something as beneficial as manure to enhance cropping practice whenever possible. "There are gradual and long-term advantages for growers to merge direct seeding and manure as a worthwhile way of retaining fresh organic matter to build soil. However, manure has less immediate value for direct seeders when used exclusively as a crop fertilizer program, especially if it requires intensive tillage as this will reduce the usefulness of direct seeding."

More information about direct seeding and manure management is available from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's web page at: http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/epw6296 and from the RT LINKAGES web site http://reducedtillage.ca/

Contact: *Ron Heller*
(780) 853-8262

Keep an eye out for bacterial wilt of geraniums

Recently, the United States Department of Agriculture's animal and plant health inspection service (USDA-APHIS) found the plant pathogenic bacterium *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 (biovar 2) in geranium cuttings that had been imported from Kenya and Guatemala. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) sampled five Ontario greenhouses that had received cuttings from Guatemala confirming the disease at one location. Further to the initial discovery, diagnostic labs forwarded positive samples to the CFIA lab from two greenhouses in Quebec and one in Ontario. The affected greenhouses have been quarantined. None of the original infected geranium cuttings were shipped to Alberta.

"*Raltstonia solanacearum* is a quarantine pest in Europe, Canada and the United States that can cause bacterial wilt in geranium and brown rot in potato," says Rob Spencer, irrigated and specialty crops specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "While *R. solanacearum* has a wide host range, Race 3 has a more restricted natural host range, which includes potato, tomato and other solanaceous crops, such as eggplants and peppers, and some weeds including nightshade, mustard and lambsquarters."

Raltstonia solanacearum is soil-borne, but can also survive in volunteer potatoes and on the roots of alternate hosts such as weeds. The pathogen enters the plant through wounds in the roots and stem or through the stomata. Once in the plant, the pathogen moves and multiplies within vascular tissues, eventually blocking off the xylem, causing death. Multiplication and development is higher at temperatures greater than 25°C and under excess moisture conditions. Disease spread in greenhouses is rapid on improperly disinfected tools or equipment, or in contaminated soil, plant material or irrigation water.

Spencer says that while bacterial wilt symptoms do not develop at temperatures less than 17°C, the pathogen will remain alive. As temperatures increase, symptoms will develop faster. "Early symptoms include the wilting of lower leaves with rolling of leaf margins, as well as some yellowing and necrosis," says Spencer. "Stems may have some brown/black discoloration around the soil level (inside and out) and roots are brown or black. Wilting of the plants is systemic, starting at the base of the plant and eventually leading to wilting and death of the entire plant."

Spencer cautions that the symptoms of bacterial wilt can be confused with those of another disease called bacterial blight, which is caused by *Xanthomonas campestris pv. pelargonii*. He says that bacterial blight does occasionally occur in Alberta, and growers should keep a watchful eye out for it.

"The spread of bacterial wilt can be minimized by ensuring strict hygiene is practiced, as well as by frequently disinfecting tools, equipment and facilities," says Spencer. "It can also be limited by removing or controlling potential alternate hosts such as weeds."

Spencer adds that while bacterial wilt of geranium has never been found in Alberta greenhouses, care should be taken to watch for this disease. In the event a suspected outbreak is found, restrict entry, prevent contamination and spread, and notify CFIA officers immediately for further direction, testing and control measures. Failure to notify CFIA officers has serious ramifications.

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CFIA plant protection officers for Alberta:

Lethbridge	Keith Merrifield	(403) 382-3079
Calgary	Nora Miller	(403) 299-7663
Red Deer	Rob Lucas	(403) 340-4272
Edmonton	Pete Volney	(780) 495-7247
Grande Prairie	Jo Coupland	(780) 831-0339

More detailed information, including pictures, can be found on the following websites:

http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/sci/surv/data/ralsole.shtml
http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/plaveg/hort/ralstoniae.shtml
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/ep/ralstonia/

Contact: *Robert Spencer*
Ag-Info Centre
1-866-882-7677

West Nile virus in horses

West Nile virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus that can cause an inflammation of the brain and spinal cord in horses, birds and humans. "The disease was first identified in the West Nile region of Uganda in 1937. Since that time, the virus has become widespread in Africa and Eurasia," says Dr. Gerald Ollis, chief provincial veterinarian, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Since being identified in the New York area in 1999, WNV has become established in the eastern United States. By the end of 2002, it had nearly spread across the North American continent. WNV is related to the viruses that cause St. Louis encephalitis and Japanese encephalitis."

WNV was detected in Canada in 2001 in wild birds and mosquitoes in Ontario. In 2002, the virus was found in birds in Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, in horses in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ontario and in humans in Ontario, Quebec and Alberta. The two Alberta patients were believed to have picked up the virus when traveling outside the province. Although WNV infections originating in Alberta have yet to be seen, the virus is expected to reach Alberta in 2003.

Ollis says that wild birds are the primary reservoir for WNV and that mosquitoes become infected when taking a blood meal from an infected bird. "Horses and people are incidental hosts, only being exposed to WNV when bitten by infected mosquitoes. The amount of virus is very low in the blood of an infected horse and mosquitoes are unlikely to become infected when feeding on an infected horse. There is no evidence to suggest WNV is transmitted from animal-to-animal or animal-to-human. As such, quarantine of infected horses is not necessary."

A large number of wild and domestic birds and animals can be infected with WNV, including bears, cattle, alpaca, dogs, cats, mountain goats and sheep. However, the infection is asymptomatic in most of these species with disease being rare. Horses, mules and donkeys can be infected when bitten by infected mosquitoes, but disease occurs in only a small proportion of these animals. Birds of the *Corvidae* family, including crows, ravens, bluejays and magpies, are very susceptible to the virus and many die after a short illness. Dead crows are often the first indication of the presence of WNV in a geographical location.

"Although horses bitten by infected mosquitoes can become infected with WNV, only a very small proportion of these infected horses will ever become sick," says Ollis. "Symptoms seen in these animals will vary from loss of appetite, depression or change in demeanor and impaired vision to variable degrees of muscle twitching, inability to swallow, head pressing, lack of coordination, weakness or paralysis of the hind limbs, an inability to get up or convulsions."

Ollis says there is currently no specific treatment for horses with WNV. "However, a veterinarian may recommend supportive care, such as intravenous fluids and good nursing care. Most horses recover from the illness but unfortunately, up to 35 per cent of affected horses in other parts of North America have reportedly died or been euthanized because of complications from the illness. Some recovered animals may have permanent neurological defects."

A killed vaccine is licensed in Canada for use in horses. Independent efficacy studies on the vaccine have not been completed. The manufacturer recommends two intramuscular injections given three to six weeks apart and an annual booster. Ollis says horse owners should consult with their veterinarian regarding the use of this vaccine as part of a comprehensive health management program.

Precautions should be considered by horse owners to minimize exposure of their horses to mosquitoes. "*Culex tarsalis* is the species of mosquito regarded to be the most important in spreading WNV from birds to horses in Alberta," says Ollis. "Larvae of these mosquitoes require warm, shallow and still water for development. Mosquitoes tend to be most active at dawn and dusk and are attracted by movement, carbon dioxide and light."

The following recommendations may help horse owners in reducing the risk to their animals:

- remove standing water from and around areas where horses are housed (pails, puddles, old tires, etc.) to eliminate breeding sites of *Culex tarsalis*
- change the water in water troughs, bird baths or wading pools at least weekly throughout the summer

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- apply an insect repellent to horses during peak mosquito times. If possible avoid working the horse just before dusk as the heavy breathing will attract the mosquitoes and sweat tends to make the repellent less effective
- cover horses with fly sheets or bring them into the barn at night if possible
- avoid leaving lights on around the horses during the night
- use a fan in the stable to deter the mosquitoes

Ollis adds that WNV is now a reportable disease in Alberta under the *Livestock Diseases Act*. "This legislation requires anyone suspecting or knowing of an outbreak of WNV in a horse to notify the chief provincial veterinarian's office. An epidemiological investigation on affected horses will be conducted in 2003."

Further information is available from:

- local veterinarians
- Dr. Gerald Ollis at gerald.ollis@gov.ab.ca
- Ropin' the Web at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/afs4377
- the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention at: http://www.cdc.gov
- the Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677

Contact: Dr. Gerald Ollis
(780) 427- 1437

Adjusting planting depth under wet soil conditions

"The later it is in spring, the more important setting the best seeding depth becomes," says Murray Green, cropping and machinery consultant, Calgary. "Current seedbed conditions in Alberta vary from generally wet to dry and mostly cold. And it's already later in the season for planting than we would have liked."

Seed placement depth and soil cover will affect several crop stand conditions including:

- the percentage of seeds to germinate. Seed/soil contact, or how well the seeds are covered and firmed with soil particles, will determine moisture uptake and germination
- the vigor of the plants that emerge. Rapid germination provides maximum energy for the seedling and the best protection from soil-borne diseases
- the number of seed or plants that are delayed in germination but emerge more than a week later. Having too many of these will result in difficult harvest decisions

"A common mistake by direct-seed farmers is to be tempted into just "scratching" the seed into the surface. This usually has poor results as any significant drying after seeding will leave some or all of the seed either stranded in dry soil or having never been covered in the first place. Subsequent rain will germinate some of this seed resulting in late-comers," says Green. "There have only been satisfactory results with very shallow placement when using broadcast canola and then incorporating and covering it with a fertilizer application operation to provide sufficient soil disturbance."

When direct seeding, wet soils break into lumps when a ground opener passes through all but the most forgiving of loamy soils. "Lumps do not make a good seed bed. They cannot easily be pressed or formed into a seal over the seed row. Heavy packing will result in a soil density that's too great for the seedling to break through," says Green. "The deeper the ground opener has to penetrate, the wetter the soil and the larger the lumps. Therefore, the decision is how deep to place the seed versus how many soil lumps are produced."

"You should also make sure there is no traffic on the unseeded part of the field to avoid packing wet soil; however, having trucks and equipment on the field after planting isn't as much of a problem."

Green suggests the following when seeding:

- ensure the depth is great enough that the seed is covered by soil
- stay out of the very damp soil deeper in the seedbed
- use an opener that does not need to penetrate deeper (fertilizer band) than about an inch below the seed placement depth

"If none of the above are possible, one solution is to harrow the field after planting. The objective is to break the lumps and mix the loose surface soil particles, even if dry, into the lumpy seedbed. This will fill the air spaces and seal the seedbed."

Another solution proven that has proven successful is to roll the field with the same machine used to roll field peas. The objective is to force the seed row furrow closed from the sides while not increasing the depth of soil cover above the seed. When harrowing or rolling is likely to be required after planting, reduce the seeding depth slightly to maintain the proper seed cover depth.

"If near the middle of May, select fields to plant based on their dryness, not on the crop type," says Green. "As well, check the seed placement depth and soil cover conditions frequently and in every field. The time taken will ensure the best emergence possible."

Further information on the recommended depth for planting of some seed types is listed at http://www.reducedtillage.ca/seedingmanagement.html

Contact: Reduced Tillage Linkages
(780) 422-7922

Manure Management 2003 conference

The Manure Management 2003 Conference will be held at the Lethbridge Lodge from June 24 - 26, 2003.

"The two-and-half day conference will address manure management strategies under the context of progress and opportunities for the industry," says Dale Chrapko, conservation coordinator, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vegreville. "First-day (June 24) activities include registration and a poster session. Morning sessions on the second day (June 25) include nutrient management strategies and manure processing options while the afternoon sees a choice of a farm or research tour. The program for the final day (June 26) includes both environmental stewardship and air-quality sessions."

Advance registration fees are $75.00 for a two-day pass or $50.00 for a one-day pass. After May 31 registration fees are $90.00 for a two-day pass or $50.00 for a one-day pass. This two-day pass includes lunch, coffee breaks, banquet, and all sessions. The one-day pass does not include the banquet.

The event is organized by:

- Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Alberta Pork
- Alberta Cattle Feeder's Association
- Natural Resources Conservation Board
- County of Lethbridge
- Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization
- Manitoba Agriculture and Food

Conference registration will begin at 6:00 pm on June 24th with the official program starting at 8:30 am June 25th.

For more information visit the website at www.agric.gov.ab.ca/manureconference

To register, call 1-800-387-6030 in Alberta or (403) 742-7942 outside of Alberta.

Contact: Dale Chrapko
(780) 632-5452

Agri-News Briefs

Beaverlodge beekeepers' field day

The 50th annual Beaverlodge Beekeepers' Field Day will be held Friday, June 20, 2003, at the Beaverlodge Research farm, Beaverlodge. The program starts at 10 a.m. and features commercial and beekeeping displays as well as research highlights. The afternoon program will include bee-related topics by guest speakers, researchers and guest apiarists. Representatives of the Alberta Beekeepers' Association and the Canadian Honey Council will also be present. There will also be a noon barbeque sponsored by honey industry members. For more information, contact Don Nelson or Stephen Pernal, Research Centre, Box 29, Beaverlodge, Alberta, T0H 0C0, phone (780) 354-5122 or (780) 354-5135, FAX (780) 354-8171, e-mail nelsond@agr.gc.ca or pernals@agr.gc.ca.

Liaison program looks to add to Alberta's value-added industry

Alberta entrepreneurs and processors will receive increased assistance for value-added opportunities through an enhanced partnership between the provincial government and AVAC Ltd. Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, says the addition of three new department staff members assigned part-time to AVAC's idea builder investment program enhances the province's previous commitment. The liaison team is dedicated to value-added agriculture growth by helping clients gain access to financing through AVAC's idea builder investment program. This program provides streamlined access to seed capital for early stage, smaller projects that add value to agricultural commodities. Projects may include ideas such as new food and health products, marketing innovations and breakthroughs in food processing technologies. Applications for AVAC's idea builder investment program are available at AVAC's web site at www.avacltd.com. Additional information is also available from Alberta's Ag-Info Centre by calling toll-free 1-866-882-7677.

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Agri-News

May 26, 2003

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy investigation in Alberta

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has quarantined an Alberta farm in an investigation of a single case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as mad cow disease.

This case of one cow was detected as part of Canada's ongoing BSE surveillance program. Alberta Agriculture officials tested a cow that had been condemned at slaughter and removed from the food system. Preliminary tests performed at a provincial laboratory and at the CFIA's National Centre for Foreign Animal Disease were unable to rule out BSE. The CFIA sent specimens to the World Reference Laboratory at Weybridge, United Kingdom, which has verified the presence of BSE.

The CFIA and the Province of Alberta are investigating the animal's origin and how its remains were processed. Information suggests that the risk to human health and the possibility of transmission to other Canadian cattle from this case are extremely low.

"Immediate action has been taken to safeguard Canadian consumers and the Canadian livestock population," said Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lyle Vanclief. Federal officials, in cooperation with provincial and industry partners, are conducting a comprehensive investigation and taking all necessary steps to control the situation.

"We remain confident in our beef and cattle industry and we will support both the CFIA and our cattle industry in eliminating this disease from Canada," said Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

The affected herd will be depopulated once the necessary samples are obtained for the purposes of the ongoing investigation. Any additional herds that are found to be at risk as a result of the investigation will also be depopulated.

This is a comprehensive investigation to trace the origin of the cow and determine how it was processed, which will provide information to control any potential spread of disease. The investigation involves thorough scrutiny of records at the farm level, abattoir, rendering plant and feed mills.

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AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

A BSE Fact Sheet: is available on the internet at http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/heasan/disemala/bseesb/bseesbe.shtml.

Also, a toll free Public Inquiries Line is in place and can be called with questions – 1-800-454-8408.

Contact: *Media Relations*
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
(613) 228-6682

Media Relations
Health Canada
(613) 957-1588

Terry Willock
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-7683

Stocking rate review: animal unit month

To ensure both that animals have sufficient forage to remain healthy, and grazing does not permanently damage soil and vegetation, animal numbers and grazing time must be controlled. Forage will deteriorate if too many animals are allowed to graze or if animals are allowed to graze too long. If grazing animals repeatedly remove forage, the plants will be weakened allowing less palatable plants to replace them. If grazing is left unchecked, all forage plants will be eventually eliminated from a pasture.

"Only a portion of the plants should be grazed to avoid damage," says Jessica McNeil, beef/forage specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "The rule of thumb of take-half leave-half has been standard in the range management profession for years. Only 50 per cent of the forage production measured on a pasture should be harvested. As a general rule, forage utiliaztion will be close to 50 per cent when the average stubble height is between 2.5 to 4 inches for bunch grasses and 1.5 to 2 inches for mat grasses."

Carrying capacity is the maximum sustainable stocking rate possible without causing damage to vegetation or related resources. Stocking rate refers to the number of animals on a given area at any one time. Due to fluctuating forage production, carrying capacity may vary from year-to-year on the same area.

McNeil says that livestock will eat 90 to 100 per cent of the available forage if they are kept in a small pasture and fed hay. With such heavy use forage plants will weaken and eventually die. After livestock have grazed to a level equal to the proper carrying capacity, livestock should be kept out of the pasture until the following year or until it has regrown.

"In order to document the length of the grazing period while describing the stocking rate, land managers have developed the term animal unit month or AUM," says McNeil. "An AUM is the amount of forage required by an "animal unit" grazing for one month. An animal unit for beef production is defined as one mature 1,000 lb cow and her suckling calf. It is assumed that such a cow nursing her calf will consume 26 to 30 lbs of forage per day, including trampling and waste of about 25 per cent; this is equivalent to 900 to 1,100 lbs of forage dry matter to feed one AU each month. An AUM is simply the standard to which grazing of various kinds of livestock can be compared."

This year pasture rental rates in Alberta are between $21 to 35 per AUM. This is equivalent to $0.75 to 1.17 per head per day. Once the animal unit equivalent (AUE) is known, the rate for grazing can be determined.

Based on a cow-calf pair being 1 AU, the AUE for

- weaned calves is 0.50
- yearling heifers and steers is 0.67 to 0.78
- bulls is 1.50
- horses (yearlings to three-year-olds and over) is 0.75 to 1.5
- Sheep and goats are measured at 0.20 AUE for ewes or does, and 0.26 for rams or bucks

"What this all means is that if you know how many AUMs of forage are available, you can either determine how many animals you can graze in a given time period or determine how long you can graze a given number of animals," adds McNeil.

The free factsheet FS1201, *Understanding the Animal Unit Month* is available on-line at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex1201, by writing the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000-113 street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697.

For further information contact the Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.

Contact: *Jessica McNeil*
1-866-882-7677

Land rolling pulse crops

Little research exists on land rolling of pulse crops. Much of what is written on land rolling of pulse crops is based on anecdotal accounts. Pulse crop fields are rolled to;

- provide a smooth and level surface (push down ridges), for faster, easier harvest operations
- push down rocks to reduce guard and sickle section breakage, as well as, expensive "internal" combine damage
- reduce dirt or "earth tag" on seed

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Post emergent rolling is dependent on pulse species. Field pea and lentil may be rolled after emergence, though, pre-emergence is preferred. Chickpea, dry bean, and fababean fields, usually, are not rolled after emergence. For chickpea, rolling after emergence may spread the devasting disease known as ascochyta blight. Also, both chickpea, dry bean and fababean develop turgid, stiff stems early in their development and rolling can cause mechanical (breakage) injury. For fababean, rolling is not necessary because of the higher pod location from the soil surface, and the good, complete stand ability of this crop.

Research by Lopetinsky et al.1993-94 on rolling of field pea fields compared to a check (not rolled) showed a trend to lower yields (although not statistically significant) by rolling late (2-3 node growth stage) with full water ballast (heavy). An early rolling (right after seeding) without water ballast (light) did not reduce field pea yield (Park, R and Lopetinsky, K, L. (eds).1999. Pulse Crops in Alberta. AGDEX 142/20-1. p63).

Research on lentils indicate that land rolling after the emergence of lentil can be successfully completed up to the five to seven node stage without significant yield loss. Rolling the lentil crop after a rain or heavy dew can increase the chance of spreading asochyta and anthracnose(Saskatchewan Pulse Growers.2000."Pulse Production Manual"p7.12).

Producers who miss their pre-emergent rolling of field pea fields often "Ask do I spray weeds first or roll the field first?" Early emerging weeds out compete, the slow to emerge and canopy, field pea crop. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada researchers in Lacombe and Lethbridge found field pea yield declined for every week spraying was delayed after emergence. Waiting four weeks after emergence resulted in a 25 per cent penalty in yield. Not rolling a field pea field, should not result in equivalent yield loss.

Rolling post emergent before spraying (especially in dry soil conditions) may result in dust on plant foliage reducing herbicide absorption and plant photosynthesis or growth. Mechanical damage of field pea plants can also affect the pea's ability to metabolize the herbicide into harmless byproducts in the plant, as well as, decrease the weeds ability to translocate or move the herbicide into itself. Bottom line, the benefits of spraying first, outweigh the risks of rolling first.

Many newer field pea varieties have better standability and if the pre-emergent rolling window is missed and the field is relatively stone free, not rolling may still be acceptable. Additionally, harrow packer bars behind airseeders can often leave a smooth enough field finish.

Long vine, tall varieties (>75-80 cm), have a higher tendency to lodge especially under condition of rain and high winds before harvest. For this reason, rolling fields when growing these types is well worth considering.

Farmers should be careful not to double roll areas of the fields such as headlands because excessive plant damage can occur Rolling the field round and round will eliminate this problem, though; there will areas of the field left unrolled. Those farmers who insist on rolling their fields back and forth should slow down to make turns at the headlands and be careful not to use their brake to turn.

If farmers wish to roll the field post emergence, rolling should be done when plants are slightly wilted and the soil surface is dry. Rolling should not be done on wet soils or when the crop is damp or stressed by extreme heat, frost or herbicide application. If practical, wait until stress conditions subside before rolling...a minimum of two to three days.

Farmer experience in land rolling of pulses crops at later growth stages show damaged plants, increased the spread of foliar diseases, and reduction in grain yield.

A quote by Blair Roth, long time special crops agrologist with Agricore United, in Lethbridge best sums up the question on land rolling pulses post emergence. "When it comes to rolling fields, make sure you are imposing no more than one stress on the pulse crop at any one time"

Links for land rolling:

http://www.reducedtillage.ca/landrollers.html

http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex17

Contact: *Mark Olsen* *Ken Lopetinsky*
(780) 422-3825 *(780) 674-8214*

Direct seeding equipment demonstration day

The Alberta Reduced Tillage LINKAGES program is hosting an in-field demonstration of low disturbance direct seeding equipment at the Olds College Farm on June 10.

"This demo day will provide producers with an excellent opportunity to see air hoe drills and air disc drills direct seeding into swath grazing residue," says Rick Taillieu, a reduced tillage agronomist with the RT LINKAGES program, Camrose. "The equipment is all field scale and each machine will place seed and fertilizer in a single pass."

The demonstration day is part of the Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Program for Canadian Agriculture. Low disturbance direct seeding is one of the Beneficial Management Practices that farmers can implement to help Canada meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets. Direct seeding allows farmers to reduce their fuel consumption, improve fertilizer efficiency, and increase the soil organic matter, which sequesters carbon in the soil.

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"The number of producers moving to direct seeding is rapidly rising thanks in part to last year's drought and the ever increasing cost of fuel and fertilizer", adds Taillieu. "One pass low disturbance seeding with precision fertilizer placement will help producers improve their efficiency and productivity"

Manufacturers expected to participate in the demonstration include Flexicoil, Morris, John Deere and Conserva Pak. There is also have a farmer from Southern Alberta bringing his John Deere 750 no-till drill that he has modified by adding residue manager wheels, which move trash away from the seed row just ahead of the disc opener.

For more information contact Rick Taillieu at 780-679-1787 or rick.taillieu@gov.ab.ca or visit the Reduced Tillage LINKAGES website at http://www.reducedtillage.ca for the latest updates.

Contact: Rick Taillieu
(780) 679-1787

Preparing horses for the marketplace

The Breed Improvement Committee of Horse Racing Alberta are sponsoring a one-day seminar, Preparing Horses for the Marketplace, at the Red Deer Lodge on June 13, 2003. The seminar is open to all breeds, and will be chaired by Les Burwash, manager of horse programs, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie.

"This seminar will provide some much needed information on what it takes to get horses ready for sale," says Burwash. "The speakers featured at this seminar will discuss health and training issues and share tips for making your horses more marketable."

Topics and guest speakers for the seminar are:

- **Managing Angular Limb Deformaties** – Dr. David Wilson, Western College of Veterinary Medicine, Saskatoon, SK – specializes in large animal surgery and conducts research in all aspects of equine surgery, including periosteal stripping
- **Fitting Horses for Auction** – Roger Daly, Roger Daly Horses, Aubrey, Texas – consigns horses from California to Texas, breaks about 100 horses and prepares over 275 horses for sale annually. He works with jumpers, dressage horses, cutting horses, thoroughbreds, standardbreds and quarter horses
- **Correct Identification and Describing Horses for Registration** – Mike Secker, Paddockhurst Stables, Edmonton, and John DeRoo, Double D Farms, High River

Registration for the seminar is $10 and covers the cost of lunch. For further information, contact Les Burwash (403) 948-8541 or the Canadian Thoroughbred Horse Society (403) 229-3609, fax (403) 244-6909.

Contact: Les Burwash
(403) 948-8541
Canadian Thoroughbred Horse Society
(403) 229-3609

Helping livestock producers capture opportunities

Although manure management used to be focused on managing a costly waste problem, the management issues of today surround capturing the benefits and opportunities. The Manure Management Conference 2003, planned for Lethbridge on June 24 to 26, 2003, is one of the first to focus on the progress made and offering steps to take advantage of the opportunities in front of the industry.

"The industry has made a key step forward, and this conference brings both issues and opportunities to the table," explains John Kolk, conference chair, AESA (Alberta's Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture) Council member and Lethbridge area producer. "The combination of nutrient farm plans, Agricultural Operations Practices Act and other regulations, water quality issues and society awareness have brought us to the point where we can move forward on opportunities."

The Lethbridge location was strategically chosen, because it provides the opportunity for producers, researchers, scientists, extension coordinators and regulators to interact close to where a lot of intensive livestock production is occurring. "This is an exciting location, and an appropriate time for where we are at in agriculture with nutrient management issues," says Kolk. The conference includes a farm tour, which will provide participants with a good overview of the industry, and the opportunity to see some of these new opportunities and nutrient management strategies already in use.

The conference offers a good mix of practical information, regulatory and policy frameworks, management strategies and opportunities. The sessions will provide participants with a sense of what is happening in other provinces and jurisdictions. U.S. and Alberta speakers will be presenting cutting edge information on odor issues, which is the hot upcoming topic. "We also have a bear pit evening planned with presenters providing information about the new AOPA regulations," explains Kolk. "There will be lots of time for discussion, and I hope lots of producers and municipalities will show up to ask questions of the researchers and framework people."

Advance registration fee for the conference is $75 for the whole conference, or $50 for a one-day pass. After May 31, registration is $90 for the full conference and $50 for a one-day pass. All registrants are eligible to enter a draw for door prizes, including Nutrient Management Plans donated by EBA Engineering Consultants Ltd. and Agri-Trend. For more information about the conference, visit the website at www.agric.gov.ab.ca/manureconference

Contact *Dale Chrapko*
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(780) 632-5452
E-mail: dale.chrapko@gov.ab.ca

Agri-News Briefs

Commercial tomato production

A new publication from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development provides growers with detailed information on successful crop production. The two main focal points in this 47-page book are commercial tomato plant propagation and pest/disease management. Included in the topics covered are seeding and transplanting; plant balance, training and pruning; flowering, pollination, fruit set and development; crop monitoring and cultural controls; common diseases and insect pests; and, chemical and biological controls. Cost of this publication is $8, plus GST. To order, call Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office toll free at 1-800-292-5697. Please add $2, plus GST for shipping and handling.

Farmland values

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) recently released data on Canadian farmland value for Spring 2003. According to stats from FCC, land values in Canada have been on the rise since July 2003. The national average value of farmland has been steadily climbing and increased by 2.6 per cent during the last half of 2002. While increases varied across Canada, the strongest increases were in the west. In Alberta, land values increased by 1.8 per cent during the last half of 2002 and were stable during the first part of 2003. Irrigated land values have leveled off somewhat after years of growth, due in part to last year's drought. Continued demand for pasture and forage land and the prospect of raising grain prices have kept Alberta land prices steady. For further information, contact Roy Hjelte at the western branch of FCC (306) 780-3489, Regina, SK. The Farmland Values report is available online at www.fcc-fac.ca

Basics for safe grilling

It takes more than a choice steak, chicken breast or fish fillet to produce a great barbecue. If food safety basics are not followed, that barbequed meal can make you sick, says Jane Carlyle of the Food Safety Info Line. Follow these simple tips for safe food from the barbecue.

- keep food cold
- marinate in the refrigerator
- defrost frozen items in the refrigerator
- place leftovers in shallow containers; refrigerate within 2 hours of cooking
- clean and sanitize equipment, utensils and work surfaces with a mild bleach solution (5 mL/ 1 tsp bleach to 750 mL/ 3 cups water) before you start and after preparing food
- wash hands with soap and hot water for 20 seconds before preparing food and after you touch raw meat, poultry or fish
- put cooked food on a clean plate
- cook to a safe internal temperature, measure with a food thermometer

For information on safe temperatures, contact Jane Carlyle Food Safety Info Line 1-800-892-8333. Be sure to ask for a free copy of the booklet ***Food Safety at Home***.

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Agri-News

June 2, 2003

Rural Alberta has certainly been through a lot lately

> *"We remain confident that the beef supply in Canada is safe, and that the national and international status of Alberta beef will be restored quickly."*
>
> **Hon. Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development**

Alberta has worked its way through drought, grasshoppers, floods and unpredictable commodity prices. Now the agriculture community must face a case of mad cow disease, properly known as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy or BSE. "Let me assure you that we're well on the way to working through this latest challenge as well," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Any disease that threatens the health of Alberta's livestock or crops – from Fusarium to foot and mouth disease – is dangerous to the agriculture industry and to the Alberta economy. All Alberta ranchers and farmers are well aware of the precautions Canada and Alberta have in place to guard against such diseases; they are a part of everyday work habits.

"To protect Canada from BSE, live imports of cattle from Britain were banned in 1990, BSE was made a reportable disease, and ruminant-to-ruminant feeding practices were also banned," adds McClellan. "Alberta has also instituted a random testing policy that far exceeds recommended testing levels.

"And, while we're confident the rules we have keep our cows free of BSE, we've always remained prepared for its appearance."

Alberta's food safety systems are the best in the world. The strict protocol and processes in place made sure the one cow that was affected with BSE in 5.2 million in Alberta was caught and did not get into the human food chain. Because this animal wasn't destined for the food chain, routine testing was conducted at a later date, in line with national standards. "Let me be clear that our first priority for testing is animals destined for the food chain. Our second priority is all others," says McClellan.

Once the disease was identified, the federal and provincial governments began a complex and complete process to trace the cow's origin and minimize any chance of spread of the disease. Tests have shown that none of the diseased cow's "herd mates" are infected with BSE, and tests will be done on other cows that may have contracted the disease. It is important to remember that this disease does not spread from one cow to another simply by contact.

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"I know Albertans are anxious to know the final results of this work. I'm anxious, too," says McClellan. "People are working around the clock to get this information compiled quickly and accurately, and once governments know, the public will as well."

The immediate task for governments is to complete the necessary investigations to ensure that the problem is under control and the disease has not spread. Once that work is done, the Alberta government will fully evaluate its animal health programs and practices. Canada has been very successful in avoiding BSE problems, but it has always been known that no beef-producing country is completely immune from the risk of BSE.

"If we find that any part of the system needs to be tightened or improved, it will be, and we'll be working closely with industry to do so," adds McClellan. "In the meantime, my Department and I will continue to provide the best and most up-to-date information possible to Albertans. In the last 15 years or so, governments and people who work in the agricultural industry have learned a lot from experiences in other countries about how to prevent and manage this disease. That's why we remain confident that the beef supply in Canada is safe, and that the national and international status of Alberta beef will be restored quickly.

"Speed is of the essence. People in many walks of life in Alberta – from ranchers to food producers and processors, from truckers to restaurant employees – rely on the cattle industry for much of their livelihood either directly or indirectly. And of course, Albertans want reassurances that their food is safe. On both counts, everything possible is being done to keep Albertans informed and to get this problem solved."

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Communications, Alberta Agriculture
(780) 422-7683
(toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first)

Answers to some questions about BSE

What is Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy? – Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, or BSE, is a progressive, fatal disease of the nervous system of cattle. It is known as a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE). Other TSEs include scrapie in sheep, chronic wasting disease in deer and elk, and Creutzfelt-Jakob disease (CJD) in humans. BSE is not contagious cannot be transmitted from direct contact with other animals.

What causes BSE? – Although the exact cause of BSE is unknown, it is associated with the accumulation in the brain of an abnormal form of protein called a prion. There is no treatment or vaccine currently available for the disease.

Is this the first case of BSE in Alberta? – No. The only other case of BSE diagnosed in Alberta was found in 1993 in a beef cow that had been imported from Britain in 1987. The animal carcass and the herd it came from were destroyed and additional measures were taken immediately by the federal government to deal with any risk that cattle might have been affected. BSE has been a reportable disease in Canada since 1990.

There have been no other BSE cases in Canada.

When was this case discovered? – In late January 2003, a six-year-old downer cow was sent for slaughter to a provincially licensed meat facility. The cow was identified as being unhealthy and an Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development meat inspector condemned the carcass as unsuitable for human consumption. The remains of the cow were sent for rendering. The head of the animal was collected and submitted routinely as part of Alberta Agriculture's surveillance program for BSE. Testing was not completed until May 16, 2003.

The preliminary test was confirmed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) May 18, 2003. The CFIA air transported the tissue sample for further confirmatory testing by scientists in the United Kingdom. The World Reference Laboratory in Weybridge, U.K, confirmed that the sample was positive for BSE early on May 20, 2003.

No part of the animal entered the human food chain.

Was the length of time between slaughter and test results unusual? – No. Because the animal was declared unfit for human consumption and was not ever going to be part of the human food chain, it was determined to be low-risk. Therefore, it was given a lower priority for testing.

If the animal had had symptoms for BSE or been destined for human consumption, it would have been tested immediately.

What will happen to the other animals on quarantined farms? – Control and eradication measures are the responsibility of the CFIA. All animals with a conclusive link to the affected cow will be tested for BSE. The CFIA is continuing its investigation to find the origin of the one BSE infected cow found in Alberta. Further information on the status of control and eradication can be obtained from the CFIA.

Is Alberta's beef safe? – Yes, Alberta beef and dairy products are safe for consumption. Alberta's food safety system is among the best in the world. Detection of this case is proof of the effectiveness of our surveillance and monitoring systems.

As well, Canada does not allow the rendered carcasses of ruminants – such as sheep, goats, cattle, deer and elk – to be fed to other ruminants. This eliminates the major transmission vector of BSE and other TSEs. BSE is not transmitted through contact between ruminants.

Additionally, the major transmitters of BSE – brains and spinal columns – are not used in processed meat products destined for human consumption.

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What happens to animals sent for rendering? – Carcasses send for rendering are subjected to extremes of heat and pressure. The carcasses are then made into either meat or bone meal, often used in fertilizers and other products such as lubricants, tallow, glue and candles. As mentioned previously, Canada does not allow the rendered carcasses of ruminants to be fed to other ruminants.

What does this mean for the beef industry? Will this affect Alberta's ability to export beef? – In 2002, the Alberta cattle and beef industry exported approximately $2.3 billion of cattle and beef products around the world. Several of our exporting partners have suspended trading of beef products until the CFIA investigation has come to a conclusion. It is up to each individual country to determine when to resume trade.

Is BSE present in other countries? – Other countries known to have cases of BSE include: United Kingdom, Germany, France, Portugal, Denmark, Spain and Italy.

Contact: *Dr. Gerald Ollis*
Chief Provincial Veterinarian
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 427-3448
(toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first)

Spruce needles disappearing?

If spruce tree needles start disappearing in June, it may be the work of the yellowheaded spruce sawfly. The damage begins with only parts of the new tender needles being eaten away, but as the pest grows so does its appetite. Once the new growth has been eaten, this pest will move to older growth, eating whole needles.

"Trees damaged by the yellowheaded spruce sawfly are shabby and look yellowish-brown because of the needle loss," says Shelley Barkley, information officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "Needle loss is not only unsightly, but can affect tree growth for a couple of years. By feeding on the new needles, the insect removes the most photosynthetically active tissue, the major source of nutrients for the evergreen. A severe attack lasting for two or more consecutive years will reduce a tree's growth by 20 to 60 per cent. Defoliation also makes trees more susceptible to other factors such as adverse weather conditions. Repeated attacks over a three- to four-year period can weaken a tree so much it may die."

Seeing this insect on your trees is the toughest part of control. The yellowheaded spruce sawfly larva is caterpillar-like. They are well camouflaged having a yellow, red or green head and yellowish-green body with six olive green stripes running its length. The body is waxy or oily looking. When the larva is disturbed, it will rear up its head and tail ends and emit a thick, green fluid from its mouth that smells like spruce. Mature insects are two centimetres (2 cm) long. Feeding stops in mid-July and the larvae then drop to the ground to spin a cocoon in the soil where they spend the winter

"Start scouting for the pest about 6 to 10 days after the bud caps fall off of the new growth of spruce," adds Barkley. "The female yellowheaded sawfly prefers sunny locations to deposit her eggs, so watch the south facing sides of the tree and check the top third to half of the tree's crown first."

Once this insect has been identified, control is as simple as hand picking the larva or hosing them off with water. Ambush is one control option, malathion and diazinon will work as well Before using any insecticide carefully read and follow label directions completely.

"The biggest trick to controlling yellowheaded spruce sawfly is seeing them," says Barkley.

Additional information on insect control is included in the publication ***Backyard Pest Management In Alberta***. The publication contains answers to over 150 common pest problems, and contains information on the proper use of pesticides and alternatives to pesticides. Cost of this publication is $5 (plus GST). Copies are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697. Please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping and handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted.

Contact: *Alberta Agriculture Publications Office*
(780) 427-0391
1-800-292-5679

Hang mosquitoes out to dry

As mosquito season approaches, it's a good idea to review tips to help control their numbers or keep them away from your house and yard.

Mosquitoes are carriers of West Nile virus. The best way for you to avoid infection is to avoid mosquito bites. Mosquitoes lay eggs in standing water, and they don't tend to travel far from where they hatch, so it makes sense to get rid of hatching sites by eliminating standing water around your house and yard.

Here is a checklist to help keep mosquitoes at bay:

- outdoor flowerpots or other containers fill with rainwater and give mosquitoes a great place to lay their eggs. Cover any kind of container, including buckets, tin cans garbage cans and recycling boxes. You could also move these containers into the garage or shed, or just make sure you dump the water out weekly. Consider drilling holes in the bottoms of plastic or wooden containers that don't need to hold water so they can drain by themselves
- get rid of junk piles or old machinery. Mosquitoes don't need much water to lay eggs, and junk often collects enough water for them to do so

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- old tires are notorious as mosquito hatching grounds. Store them in a garage or shed, cover them so they don't collect rainwater, or take scrap tires to the local recycling center or landfill
- empty water from children's plastic wading pools when not in use and turn them over – or store them in a garage or shed
- check storm drains and window wells for standing water. If you fix leaky outdoor faucets, you reduce mosquito hatching sites and conserve water at the same time
- you don't need to worry about swimming pools if they are kept clean and chlorinated. You do need to be careful about ornamental pools or ponds. They can beautify a garden, but can be perfect hatching sites. Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with fish
- check your swimming pool cover, car covers or any other tarps on your property – water tends to collect in them if they sag
- people who want to attract bird life to their yards should be careful with birdbaths; they are an attractive spot for mosquitoes to lay their eggs. Empty and refill birdbaths weekly
- leaves can collect in the eaves troughs and downspouts on houses. These leaves can create shallow pools when it rains, so clean them out
- fill in potholes in your driveway where standing water can collect
- consider landscaping your property to eliminate low spots. Just like in eaves troughs, small piles of leaves can hold just the right amount of water where mosquitoes eggs can hatch
- keep mosquitoes out of your house by fixing broken window or door screens and attic vents so mosquitoes can't get in

Factsheets on West Nile virus and the ***Fight The Bite*** campaign are available on the internet at http://www2.gov.ab.ca/home/index.cfm?page=490. Albertans who do not have internet access can pick up these factsheets at their MLA constituency office and local health units.

Contact: Alberta Health and Wellness
Communications
(780) 427-7164

Tools to build confidence in Family Farm Succession

In the next decade, an estimated 23,000 Alberta farmers will reach retirement age. More than 75 per cent of these family businesses will change hands through either outright sale or transfer to the next generation. Farmers and their advisors need to plan ahead for the eventual sale or transfer of the family business.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development continues to provide information and tools to help farm families and their advisors in the farm succession process. One of these information sources is the yearly ***Between Generations*** seminar. Now in its seventh year, this seminar focuses on new and innovative techniques for farm succession advisors – accountants, lawyers, financial planners, and other practitioners who work with farm families on business structure, strategy and management.

Topics for this year include:

- **The Use of Trusts in Farm Succession Planning** – understand the basics of trusts and their use in a farm succession plan
- **How To Track $ Taken Out of the Business** – learn how to track labour, management, return on capital, loans and withdrawals out of the farm business.
- **What Do You Owe Your Children?** – using personal estate assets as an example, appreciate the viewpoint of farm clients as they struggle with distributing their farm assets.
- **Tips and Traps in Family Farm Succession**
- **An Overview of the Agriculture Industry** – explore global and local realities facing Alberta farm manager.

For 2003, advisors are encouraged to bring their clients. Producers are also welcome to attend the sessions.

The seminar will be held in two locations: in Calgary on June 17, 2003 at the Greenwood Inn and in Red Deer on June 18, 2003 at the Capri Centre. Seminar registration begins at 8:00 a.m. and presentations begin at 8:30 a.m. Registration cost is $175 per person, and $50 each for each additional attendee from the same agricultural operation or company. Visa, MasterCard and cheques are accepted.

To register call the Alberta Ag-Info Centre toll free at 1-866-882-7677.

Contact: Alberta Ag-Info Centre
1-866-882-7677

Chickpeas bring researchers together

In January 2003, chickpea researchers from around the world gathered in India to discuss future priorities and research strategies for chickpea improvement.

"This assembly was truly a meeting of the world, with 30 scientists from India, Australia, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Canada and Nepal in attendance," says Dr. Manjula Bandara, special crops agronomist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Crops Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks, who was one of three Canadian scientists at the

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meeting. "Over the course of two days we visited greenhouses, laboratories and field test plots, and met to discuss chickpea research priorities and to exchange information."

Researchers from the International Crop Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the National Agricultural Research System (NARS) of India, presented information on the current situation in India and reviewed future priorities for chickpea research.

"In India, there are 6.82 million hectares of chickpea production with 5.25 million tonnes of product. During the past two decades, chickpea production has increased from 4.11 million tonnes to 5.25 million tonnes," says Bandara. "The biggest factor in yield gain is the increase in productivity, all made possible by collaborative work in genetic resource management, screening technique development, donor identification and varietal development by both agencies."

ICRISAT and NARS have two main priorities for chickpea research:

- to develop varieties suitable for late seeding and early maturing varieties with cold tolerance for northern India
- to incorporate drought tolerance into the genetics

To meet these two goals, research will focus on genetics, production and protection:

- genetic materials will be used for the development of efficient plants for different cropping systems and ecological zones
- production studies will focus on the refinement of chickpea production technology suitable for cereal-based intensive cropping systems and on the management of intercrops and their effect on nutrient and weed management
- protection options will focus on integrated pest management

"Research in other areas of the world has goals similar to those of the ICRISAT and NARS," says Bandera. "India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal focus on dealing with biotic facts such as insects, wilt/root rot complex and weeds, while researchers in Canada, Ethiopia and Australia place more effort on foliar (Ascochyta blight) and root diseases. All researchers involved with chickpeas, no matter where in the world they do their work, are trying to solve common problems such as drought tolerance, disease and pest resistance and short-growing seasons."

As an outcome of this meeting, seven chickpea lines from ICRISAT were sent to CDCS to see how they perform under southern Alberta conditions. "World-wide collaboration among like-minded scientists and research institutions is an example of a further bonus of this summit," adds Bandara.

Contact: Manjula Bandara
(403) 362-1355

Agri-News Briefs

New factsheet on rangeland nutrient application

Application of livestock manure to native range effects the cycling of plant nutrients in soil. A new factsheet, ***Manure Application and Nutrient Balance on Rangeland*** (Agdex # 538-1) has been produced to help land managers understand the effects manure can have on native range. The factsheet discusses range soil development, nutrient cycling in rangeland soils, how manure affects forage yield and quality, and the effects of nutrient application on rangeland plant species. This factsheet is available free of charge at Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 or by calling toll free in Alberta 1-800-292-5697.

Third Canadian Barley Symposium

The third Canadian Barley Symposium is being held in Red Deer on June 19 and 20, 2003. Hosted by the Barley Development Council, the symposium opens with the Council's annual meeting. The agenda for the two days include sessions on marketing, malting barley, feed barley and food barley. Registration fee is $200 per person. For further information or to register, contact Jim Helm, Barley Development Council, 5030 - 50 Street, Lacombe, AB T4L 1W8, or telephone (403) 782-8696.

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Agri-News

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Operation CleanFarm

Farmers in central Alberta can make the environment safer and cleaner as phase two of ***Operation CleanFarm*** gets underway from October 21 to 23, 2003.

Operation CleanFarm offers farmers the opportunity to dispose of old crop protection products at no cost. Products such as herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and rodenticides that may have been stored on-farm for years, presenting a potential hazard as containers age and possible leakage occurs, will be targeted for collection and disposal.

Thirty-five collection sites will be set up throughout central Alberta, making it convenient for farmers to drop off their unwanted pesticides.

"In 2002, phase one of ***Operation CleanFarm***, a three-year stewardship program initiated by CropLife Canada, was launched in the Peace River region and collected almost 22 tonnes of old pesticides," says Tim Morrison, a spokesperson for Alberta Environment, Edmonton. "Phase two will target over 35,000 farmsteads in the area from Red Deer north to Athabasca. The final phase, to be launched in 2004, will target southern Alberta."

Alberta's program is a collaboration of government, industry and the agricultural community, with the twin goals of environmental and health protection. CropLife Canada, an association of crop protection manufacturers and distributors, is contributing 50 per cent of the program costs. The other 50 per cent is funded by the Agriculture and Food Council of Alberta through the Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development fund. Other participants contributing time, expertise and facilities include Alberta Environment, Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, the Canadian Association of Agri Retailers, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and several other producer groups.

"This initiative is part of a Canada-wide obsolete pesticide collection and disposal program that was first introduced in 1998," adds Morrison. "To date, over 500 metric tonnes of obsolete agricultural pesticides have been collected coast to coast through programs in Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta. A program is also under development in Manitoba."

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Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@gov.ab.ca

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For more information regarding ***Operation CleanFarm*** and the collection sites, visit www.gov.ab.ca/env/protenf/pesticide/cleanfarm. Information is also available through Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag-Info Centre, toll free in Alberta by dialing 1-866-882-7677.

Contact: *Tim Morrison*
Communications, Alberta Environment
(780) 427-1693

Alberta Rural Health Week – June 16 - 22

The second annual Alberta Rural Health Week is being celebrated June 16 to 22, 2003. This special week, facilitated by the Alberta Rural Physician Action Plan (RPAP), is the result of the collaboration of 30 groups representing many provincial and regional rural health interests. The annual focus offers opportunities for community partners to talk about the challenges of rural health service delivery and to showcase the positive contributions of rural health professionals and organizations.

Rural health service delivery faces some unique challenges not seen in urban areas – large geographic distances, the ease of access to health services, and issues related to recruitment and retention of rural health workers. Just as Alberta's health system is evolving, so too is rural health practice as it responds and finds new ways to embrace emerging technologies, improve medical practices and enhance skills of rural health professionals.

Access to health services contributes to the quality of life for rural Albertans. Good quality emergency care, routine obstetric care, chronic illness care and follow up of illnesses treated in tertiary care centres are important services for rural Albertans to have available locally. According to the 2001 Census, about 925,000 or 31 per cent of Alberta's total population of 2,974,807 is rural based. Statistics Canada defines 'rural' as being the population living in towns and municipalities outside the commuting zone of larger urban centres with a population of 10,000 or more.

For more information about Alberta Rural Health Week, contact Rhonda Crooks, RPAP communications consultant at (403) 208-5402, or call your local health authority.

Contact: *Rhonda Crooks*
RPAP Communications Consultant
(403) 208-5402
E-mail: startingpointsinc@shaw.ca

Managing livestock mortality

Currently, Alberta rendering plants are still accepting cattle carcasses for disposal, however, producers may want to take some time to consider on-site management of livestock mortality should the need for on-farm handling arise.

"Some rendering plants in Canada are no longer accepting ruminants for disposal. This means that producers need to know how to safely dispose of, or compost livestock carcasses on their own property," says Dr. Gerald Ollis, Chief Provincial Veterinarian with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton.

Alberta Agriculture has a series of free publications that covers proper handling and disposal or composting of dead livestock, including information on guidelines and regulations. The four booklets are: ***Livestock Mortality Management (Disposal)*** (Agdex #400/29-1); ***Livestock Mortality Burial Techniques*** (Agdex #400/29-2); ***Swine Mortality Composting*** (Agdex #440/29-1); and, ***Poultry Mortality Composting*** (Agdex #450/29-1). An additional factsheet, ***Pre-selecting Mass Carcass Disposal Sites*** (Agdex #FS400/29-3) also contains information producers may want to be aware of.

"It is important to know in advance how to handle a situation," adds Ollis. "Producers should have a plan in place in the event that on-farm disposal of their livestock mortality is required. This will be especially important should there be an incident where a large proportion of the herd must be disposed of, such as in the event of a barn fire, exposure to a chemical toxin or a foreign animal disease incursion."

The mortality management publications are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, or by phoning toll free 1-800-292-5697. They are also available on the Alberta Agriculture web site www.agric.gov.ab.ca, and can be found by following these links: *Ministry Information > Agriculture Information > Free Publications > Animals and Aquatic Life Publications*. Publications are then listed by Agdex number and by name.

Contact: *Dr. Gerald Ollis*
(780) 427-3448
(dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton)

Nutrient management plans help producers optimize value in manure

Livestock manure is a resource that contains several valuable nutrients. To realize the full value of these nutrients, producers are encouraged to develop nutrient management plans for their operations.

"Developing a nutrient management plan, using creative management and appropriate technology, can turn manure into money," explains Dr. Bill McGill, Dean of the College of Science and Management, University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George. "Nutrients in manure are a valuable resource. Not developing a proper nutrient management plan means wasting this valuable resource. Failing to capture the benefits of this valuable resource also turns it into an environmental burden."

Producers using manure need to think about the balance of nutrients. "Manure isn't a perfect blended fertilizer and will not replace all of fertilizer needs, it's just one of the tools in a plant nutrition toolbox," says McGill. "Proper application and balance of nutrients is also important, because too many nutrients added in one location can create environmental difficulties." Along with the valuable resources in manure, there can also be some troublesome materials such as salts and others that need to be properly managed.

McGill is a keynote speaker in the Nutrient Management Session at the ***Manure Management 2003 Conference – Progress and Opportunities*** being held in Lethbridge on June 24 to 26, 2003.

"I will be talking more about the rates of release of nutrients, and how that information can be used to predict amounts to add over appropriate areas," McGill says. "I will also be looking at potential options for technologies that might be available."

Other conference sessions focus on manure processing, regulations, environmental stewardship and air quality. The conference offers a good mix of practical information, regulatory and policy frameworks, management strategies and opportunities.

"In keeping with the topic of nutrient management plans, two major door prizes valued at over $1000 each will be offered," says Dale Chrapko, provincial conservation coordinator with Alberta Agriculture, Vegreville. "Two lucky producers can enter their name to win professionally developed Nutrient Management Plans donated by EBA Engineering Consultants Ltd. and Agri-Trend."

Anyone attending the conference and who fills in a conference evaluation will have their name entered in the draw. The door prizes will be drawn on the last day at the last session, and participants have to be there in-person to win.

"Nutrient management plans not only add value to manure and to the operation, they help producers meet regulations and improve environmental stewardship management," says Chrapko.

This is the fifth annual tri-provincial manure conference organized by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization and Manitoba Agriculture and Food.

For more information about the conference, visit Alberta Agriculture's web site at:
www.agric.gov.ab.ca/manureconference

Contact: *Dale Chrapko*
(780) 632-5452
E-mail: dale.chrapko@gov.ab.ca

Gift horses support College Equine Program

Industry partnerships are an important ingredient in the success of Fairview College programs. The relationship between this northern Alberta college and the Wild Rose Equine Ranchers Association of Alberta (WRERA) is no exception.

"For the past three years, WRERA has been donating registered quarter horse, paint and appaloosa weanlings to the College's Horse Training and Horsemanship programs," says Deb Craig, communications officer for Fairview College, Fairview. "These highly successful programs are western in focus and have earned the College a place among the top 10 in North America."

The Horse Training program requires unbroke two- to three-year-olds that are then trained by the students over the course of the school year.

"The donations from the WRERA help us with the annual task of finding sound, good quality horses for the program," explains Wendy Ross, equine instructor at the College. "In the past, the College has purchased 16 to 20 head of registered animals every year, but this was often difficult. Many of the local breeders had already sold or started their colts by the time the college needed to purchase them."

Dean of Agricultural Technologies, Dalin Bullock, adds that not every horse is suited to the college program. "Our program is well-known for being hands-on, and fully 50 per cent of class time is spent in the arena. The horses are used intensively."

Ross agrees, "Our program is western in focus, with reining and ranch application. We find the three breeds – quarter horse, paint and appaloosa – to be the most ideal for the program and very marketable afterwards. And the Wild Rose Equine Ranchers Association is able to provide these breeds for us."

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With quality, registered weanlings donated annually from reputable equine ranches, the college is building a steady supply of horses. The young animals range from three- to six-months old when they first arrive at the college farm. By the time a group of horses is old enough to be used in the program, there's another group right behind them that will be ready for the following September.

"Having younger horses on the College farm is a bonus for both Horsemanship and Horse Training students," explains Ross. "All of the students get to work with the colts and halter break them, doing ground work and some lungeing. Plus, they learn about the nutritional needs of young horses. If they're ever going to breed horses or work for a breeder, this is good experience for them."

Equine student Laura Nash finds the young animals "very cute" and quite useful. "It's great to have the young horses here. We've got babies, yearlings and three-year-olds now, so you get experience working with horses of all ages," she says.

Horse Training students must complete a six-week work experience as part of their program. "Being positively exposed to the donated colts may influence some students to choose equine ranches for their practicum," says Bullock. "They may later choose to become involved in the industry."

At the end of the school year in March, just before they leave for their various practicums, all of the students work together to organize the college's Annual Horse Sale. The newly trained horses are sold in the auction, with buyers coming from all over Alberta and BC. A horse that has come from WRERA is identified as such in the auction booklet, with full credit going to the breeder who donated the animal.

"The colts are very much in the public eye throughout the year, but especially during the sale. It's good public relations for the equine ranching industry," says Bullock. "They benefit, we benefit, and I think the horses benefit too. Everyone wins."

Contact: Deb Craig
(780) 835-6609 or 1-888-999-7882 ext. 609
E-mail: dcraig@fairviewcollege.com

Agri-News Briefs

Put some turkey on the 'barbee'

Summer is barbecue time and the Alberta Turkey Producers (ATP) has compiled a brochure full of turkey recipes fit for the grill. Dawn Ius, marketing and communications coordinator for ATP, says that turkey is healthy, low fat and easy to prepare. Whether you are barbecuing Jalapeno Turkey Burgers, Turkey Teriyaki Cutlets, Caribbean Turkey Kebobs, or a whole turkey, the key to delicious turkey is cooking time. Turkey is a lean meat that has little moisture content, this makes it important to watch cooking time carefully. The ***Barbecue With Alberta Turkey*** brochure is available by contacting Ius at (780) 465-5755, Edmonton, or e-mail dawn@abturkey.ab.ca. Additional turkey recipes are posted on the ATP web site at www.albertaturkey.com.

Sheep shearing course

The Alberta Sheep and Wool Commission is organizing a two-day sheep shearing course is being held near Ponoka on June 21 and 22, 2003. Course instructor is Hugh Hermery. Information on fleece preparation is also included. Cost of the course is $150 (plus GST) and includes all tuition, equipment use and lunch for both days. Participants who have their own sheering equipment are encouraged to use this course to gain additional practice with their own tools. The course is limited to 12 students, so early registration is advised. For further information or to register, contact the Alberta Sheep and Wool Commission, Agriculture Centre, 909 Irricana Road, Airdrie or call (403) 948-8534. This number is toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first.

The 2003 Emerald Awards

Awards in 11 categories will be presented on June 11, 2003 at 5:30 p.m. at the Jack Singer Concert Hall, EPCOR Centre for the Performing Arts, 205 - 8th Avenue S.E., Calgary. For further information, contact Becky Vander Steen, executive director, Emerald Awards, (780) 413-9629 or 1-800-219-8329, or visit the Emerald Awards web site at www.emeraldawards.com for a ticket order form and listing of the finalists.

Barrel racing futurity

The Diamond N Ranch is hosting the inaugural Richardson's Crystal Classic Futurity and Diamond Derby Barrel Racing event on June 17 and 18, 2003 at the ranch in Stettler. The Richardson's Crystal Classic Futurity event is for barrel racing horses aged five-years old and under, offering prize money of $3,000. The Diamond Derby event is for six- and seven-year old barrel racing horses and offers prize money of $2,000. The Futurity and Derby each consists of two go-rounds. The top 12 competitors in each event will receive a sponsored trophy fly sheet and come back for a short go. For these events, $500 is offered each day in open barrel racing jackpots. The event promises to be exciting to watch and spectators are welcome to come watch and cheer. For further entry details and registration, contact K.R. Warner or Dawn Hellekson at (403) 742-2125.

Adair family wins ACTS Farm Family Conservation award

Stan and Arlene Adair and their son Gregg, a Westlock area farm family, won the 2003 ACTS Farm Family Conservation Award. They began exploring direct seeding and/or zero till on their farm in the mid-1990s. The Adair's reason for making the switch to direct seeding for was initially time and fuel savings, but the family now says it's also overall soil health that is a huge benefit to crop production. Gregg Adair acknowledge the support and encouragement of agrologists Mark Olson and Bill Chapman, whose assistance was especially critical in the first few years of making the switch. Mark Olson, former ARTI agronomist, is now a pulse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and Bill Chapman an Alberta Agriculture cereals specialist. Both are committed supporters of direct seeding, and have seen proof of its benefits in their research. "This one of best examples of how a new technology gets transferred to the farm" says Mark Olson, Pulse Specialist. "It wasn't really any one individual that made it happen but rather a joint effort with industry to provide all the pieces of the puzzle to give the farmer the support to make the change." The ACTS Farm Family Award is presented to farm families showing leadership in adoption of soil conservation practices in their community. The award was presented to the Adair family on January 30, 2003 at the FarmTech 2003 banquet. For more information on direct seeding or questions please call, Gregg Adair (780) 349-4084, Ken Wasmuth (780) 842-2225, Peter Gamache (780) 422-7922, Mark Olson (780) 422-3825 or Bill Chapman (780) 674-8258.

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June 16 2003

Proposed changes to Alberta cattle industry structure and representation

The Alberta Beef Producers (ABP) and Alberta Beef Council (ABC) have made significant progress in their discussions regarding structure and representation within the Alberta beef industry. Changing dynamics within the industry led to a series of meetings over the last several months to examine ways to enhance both representation and structure within the ABP. The goal is to better enable the industry to respond to new issues and challenges more quickly and with a more unified voice.

Subject to approval at the ABP semi-annual meeting this June in Edmonton, the ABP Board will be expanded to include representation from an elected ABP Cattle Feeder Council. Feeder council delegate elections are proposed to take place along with the annual ABP producer delegate elections this fall.

Discussions are also underway about how to include broader representation to the ABP from an industry council that is being established. Producers will further develop this concept for consideration during the ABP fall meetings.

ABP Chairman, Arno Doerksen welcomes the changes and states, "As our industry faces increased challenges and opportunities, we need to be able to respond quickly and coherently as an industry on a broad range of issues. ABP is a producer organization and the new structure will continue to be accountable to producers in the future, as it has been in the past."

ABC Chairman, Jeff Warrack agrees, "the proposed new structure provides us with a valuable new tool that will help facilitate change." But he also adds a note of caution by suggesting that, "we must be careful to recognize this is only a first step and we face the even more difficult challenge of integrating into this new structure, an operating system driven by strategic collaboration amongst industry sectors and interests."

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, has been impressed by the cooperation and willingness of those within the industry to welcome constructive change. "While internal disputes have marred similar initiatives elsewhere in North America, I have great admiration for our cattle industry that has not only identified structure and representation issues, but moved to improve them in a unified manner," says McClellan. "I have said from the outset of these talks that our cattle industry

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should and will resolve their differences and concerns themselves, without government involvement. My faith in them has proven well founded. I sincerely thank all involved. I feel our agriculture industry will be stronger as a result of their deliberations and dedication to reaching agreement on both representation and structure. It is our producers who make our cattle industry the economic dynamo that it is."

Contact:	*Arno Doerksen*	*Jeff Warrack*
	Chairman ABP	*Chairman ABC*
	(403) 641-2498	*(403) 934-4186*

Fresh, fun and fabulous!

Alberta freshness is now at local Farmers' Markets. There are over 95 Approved Farmers' Markets in Alberta with friendly vendors waiting to serve you. You can spot Approved Farmers' Markets by the ***Sunnygirl*** logo on highway signs and market promotion materials. Displaying this logo means that the market adheres to the guidelines of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, ensuring the highest quality products are available there.

"All approved farmers' markets in Alberta follow the ***make it, bake it, grow it*** philosophy," says Penny Wilkes, farmers' market specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "These markets understand how important it is for customers to know where their food is produced, and vendors are encouraged to share production techniques, food preparation information and even recipes with their customers. Farmers' market vendors are a unique breed of people – they love meeting and interacting one-on-one with the people who use their product. They are proud of what they produce."

A 2002 survey commissioned by the Alberta Farmers' Market Association (AFMA), indicates the top three reasons that people shop at farmers' markets are: freshness of products, quality of products, and support for local farmers. Social atmosphere was also very important. This study also showed that the economic impact on communities that have Farmers' Markets was very positive with market-goers taking advantage of shops and services in the area.

July 13 to 19, 2003 is Farmers' Market Awareness Week and Alberta Agriculture Approved Farmers' Markets across the province invite you to help them celebrate. Mark your calendar – and plan to visit your local farmers' market.

Come for the freshness and stay for the fun!

For a listing of all Alberta Agriculture approved farmers' markets call (780) 427-4611or check out the web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca/farmersmarket

Contact: *Penny Wilkes*
(780) 427-4514
E-mail: penny.wilkes@gov.ab.ca

Feedlot feeding options for stretching cattle

The Canadian BSE Beef trade ban has many feedlot and backgrounding operators contemplating feeding programs to delay marketing of fat cattle. The alternatives for cattle that are reaching the upper limits of slaughter weight categories can be limited, however, gearing rations to a higher roughage component or limit feeding will provide opportunity to stretch and or increase the days on feed so that the cattle may be marketed at a more opportune time.

"Gearing rations down from a 10 per cent roughage base (dry matter basis) to 40 per cent may be an option to slow gain, provided that there are enough roughage reserves," says Christoph Weder, beef cow/calf specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Spirit River. "This process can be done over a five- to ten-day window with minimal metabolic problems in the cattle."

Besides supply, management will need to address the issues of bunk space and time management so that this feeding program is conducive to getting all the pens fed on time. Another thing to consider with higher roughage diets will be feed conversion; simply reducing grain and increasing the roughage component will not mean that cattle gain slower and it may also mean that conversion rates may go from 6:1 to 10:1. Simply increasing the roughage component is probably not the whole answer.

"Another option that many researchers have studied for use in backgrounding cattle is limit fed rations," adds Weder. "With limited feeding, dry matter intake is reduced and this will impact gain and effect the market time for cattle. In terms of finished cattle, a limited amount of work has been done. Steve Loerch at Ohio Sate University is one of the primary researchers working in the area of limit feeding. Some of his more recent work shows that it can also be used with finished cattle."

Making limit feed rations work comes down to management. Cattle need a five- to ten-day adjustment period depending on the level of limit feeding, and bunk management will become even more critical, especially if bunk space is limited. Morning feedings followed by a re-feeding three hours later has proved the best method in dealing with aggressive cattle. However, limit feeding works better if pen space is available to provide additional bunk space.

"Limit feeding does not simply mean decreasing the finishing ration by 20 per cent in amount fed," says Weder. "Roughage content and fiber length must also be considered. The best method is to increase the roughage level by 50 per cent to 100 per cent. This means that if there was 10 per cent roughage in the ration, increase it to 15 per cent or 20 per cent. Adding chopped straw to the ration may also be another option."

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After discussions with Loerch and a review of recent work on limit feeding, it appears that there is no negative effect on carcass qualities and or yield of heavier (1,200 -1,300 lb.) cattle. If cattle are fed increased levels of roughage, they will have larger gut fill that may impact hanging carcass yield. Another thing to keep in mind is that if cattle have been reimplanted within the last 45 days (especially with a TBA) increasing the roughage and or limit feeding is not an option as there will be negative effects on carcass traits.

"These are some of the options for slowing cattle gain and or increasing the days on feed until marketing opportunity allows these fat cattle to be moved," says Weder. "Deciding which option to use is a matter of economics and the resources that are available to a feedlot. Producers may want to use partial budgeting to calculate what these options will cost and compare the cost to what may or may not be received for the cattle."

The chart below has a list of some of the rations that can be used, and the cost of gain.

Contact: *Christoph E. Weder*
(780) 853-7594 or (780) 864-3878

Future counselors get ready to uncover the mystery!

As another school year comes to an end, nearly 80 4-H members prepare for an experience of a lifetime. From June 30 to July 4, 2003, 4-H members aged 15 to 20, will travel to the Alberta 4-H Centre at Battle Lake to take part in the annual Leadership Through Counseling Seminar (LTCS).

During the program, 4-H staff will promote communication, teambuilding, leadership, problem solving and personal development skills. This year's LTCS theme, *Putting the Pieces Together*, will teach delegates how to run safe and exhilarating summer camps. LTCS training includes non-stop activities, such as small group sessions, archery, canoeing, campfires, first aid, water safety, crafts and much more.

"This program gives delegates the keys to succeed at solving future counseling and life mysteries," comments Deanna Vogel, 4-H summer staff, Airdrie. "LTCS helps participants feel confident about themselves and their abilities, as they become role models for younger 4-H members and part of the 2003 4-H counseling team."

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Limit and Alternative Feeding Options to Stretch Marketing on 1,300 lb Implanted Exotic Cross Steer

	NEM 9.83	NEG 9.80			
Feed Values:	Barley Silage	$42.50/ton			
	Barley Straw	$30/bale			
	Barley Grain	$3.25/bushel			
	10% Beef Supp	$200/ton			
	Full Feed	**Increased Silage**	**Increased Straw**	**16% Reduced**	**30% Reduced**
	lbs	*lbs*	*lbs*	*lbs*	*lbs*
	10 Barley silage	42 Barley silage	10 Barley silage	10 Barley silage	10 Barley silage
	0 Barley straw	0 Barley straw	5 Barley straw	5 Barley straw	5 Barley straw
	25 Barley grain	10 Barley grain	20 Barley grain	15 Barley grain	10 Barley srain
	1 10% beef supp	1 10% beef supp	1 10% beef supp	1 10% beef supp	1 10% beef supp
DMI	26.70	25.60	26.70	22.30	17.90
Cost/day	$2.00	1.68	$1.81	$1.47	$1.13
Expected gain	3.9	2.6	3.1	2.1	1.1
Yardage/day	$0.35	$0.35	$0.35	$0.35	$0.35
Cost per lb gain*	$0.60	$0.78	$0.70	$0.87	$1.35
Days to finish at 1,400 lbs	26	38	32	48	91

Sponsored by Agrium, ATCO Electrical/ATCO Gas, Meyers Norris Penny, Peavey Mart and the Wetaskiwin Cooperative Association Ltd., LTCS delivers an unforgettable experience by combining educational, social and recreational events. Delegates of the program will have numerous opportunities to implement and build on their newly learned skills while counseling regional and provincial camps near Bonnyville, Westlock, Peace River, Medicine Hat and Wetaskiwin.

For more information on 4-H, visit the web site at www.4h.ab.ca or contact the Provincial 4-H Office at (780) 422-4H4H.

Contact:	*Deanna Vogel* *(403) 948-8548*	*Mark Muchka* *(780) 422-4444*

Take the guesswork out of planning

Any good manager will tell you good planning strategies are essential to be successful in business. Pinpointing those strategies and prioritizing which activities will move your business forward are increasingly important in today's fast paced business environment.

"We can compare good planning strategies (GPS) with a relatively new technology, global positioning systems, or GPS," says Janice McGregor with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's, Ag-Entrepreneurship Division in Stony Plain. "In global positioning systems, signals from satellites are picked up by receivers on the ground and define the receiver's exact location. This information is then entered into a geographic information system (GIS) that stores, analyzes and displays data. A GIS allows users to analyze the collected data and see relationships between different types of data. Good planning strategies can work much like the GPS/GIS system by helping managers identify where their business is now and where it is headed.

If you don't know where you're going, any path will get you there. The most effective strategy or tool you have at your disposal is a sound business plan. This planning document outlines the vision for your company, its goals, production capabilities, financial status, marketing methods, and the skills of the people involved.

"It is not enough just to have the plan in place," adds McGregor. "Business plans are living documents and need to be referred to regularly as a road map for the business. This plan can be used to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of a business. A year-to-year analysis helps determine if progress is being made and it helps identify areas for improvement."

Between new competition, locally and globally, and changing customer expectations, a successful business continually has to update its products and services to stay competitive. There are lots of possibilities to choose from, so it doesn't make sense for businesses to dilute themselves by getting into too many areas. Determine what your core strengths are and develop them to create a name for the business. Once you've determined your focus, constantly scan the environment, identify trends and analyze opportunities. If you aren't prepared for change you'll be left behind. This is building on strengths with tomorrow's possibilities in mind.

"By their very nature agri-preneurs are passionate about their businesses, products and services," says McGregor. "But it's hard to maintain the enthusiasm and passion if surrounded by people who are only tell you what you're doing wrong, or point out how soon you will fail. A certain amount of mental toughness, persistence and a strong belief in yourself and your vision are crucial to success. You have to be totally committed to your vision and inspire others through your enthusiasm."

Insufficient information can be a big downfall for agri-preneurial businesses. Agri-preneurs need to develop a certain amount of tolerance for ambiguity. You are not always going to have all the answers you need to make decisions. You have to have faith in your ability to act on your gut feeling and seize the opportunity. All the good business planning tools and strategies in the world will not help if you don't move on your decisions and take control of your business.

To learn more about good planning strategies, subscribe to the ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** newsletter. The ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** provides timely, incisive and creative ideas for agriculture entrepreneurs. It is available free of charge by contacting Alberta Agriculture's Westlock office and asking to have your name added to the mailing list. Contact Kerry Engel or Darleen Lynes in Westlock at (780) 349-4466 (dial 310-0000 for toll free service in Alberta) or e-mail: kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780)349-4466

Agri-News Briefs

Exporting to Chile seminar

Representatives from the Canadian Embassy in Chile, Trade Chile and the Chilean food retail sector will be in Canada from June 16 to 20, 2003. Representatives from the Chilean Supermarket Association, the Chilean Ministry of Health, the Canadian Embassy, Trade Chile, the Jumbo Supermarket Chain and Velarde Hermanos (an importer) will be in Edmonton for a seminar on June 19, 2003. This is a good opportunity for exporters who are looking at diversifying their markets and want to learn more about Chile. Canada has had a free trade agreement with Chile since 1997. For more details on the seminar, please contact Ray Darwent at (780) 495-5528, e-mail: darwentr@agr.gc.ca; Marcia O'Connor, trade director, Mexico Latin America, Agriculture and Food Branch, Alberta Economic Development, (780) 422-1762, e-mail: marcy.oconnor@gov.ab.ca; or Lynn Weisenburger (780) 495-5527, e-mail: weisenburgel@agr.gc.ca.

June 30 deadline for GALA nominations

The Growing Alberta Leadership Awards (GALA) are presented each year to individuals and organizations contributing to the progress and impact of Alberta's agriculture and food industry. This year, awards will be given in each of the following areas:

- Food safety
- Environmental stewardship
- Economic or market development
- Building youth leadership
- Innovation
- Community spirit

Nominees can be from the private or public sector, work in primary production, research and development, value-added processing, food retaining or food service. All nominees must be based in Alberta or have a major presence or impact in Alberta. Deadline for nominations is June 30, 2003. Nomination packages and further details are available on the Growing Alberta web site and can be downloaded from www.growingalberta.com. Information and nomination packages are also available by calling Growing Alberta at (780) 955-3714.

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Agri-News

June 23 2003

$10.5 million federal/provincial grasshopper program targets areas of greatest need

Alberta producers suffering from severe or very severe grasshopper infestations will have a new weapon to help them deal with the crop-devastating pest: a $10.5-million federal/provincial program that will help defray their grasshopper control expenses. The program was announced on June 11, 2003 by federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief and Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

"We are committed to working with the Province of Alberta to ensure producers have the tools they need to deal with this problem," said Vanclief. The funding package offers help to producers so they can deal with grasshopper infestations that have caused very serious, very real damage to their livelihoods.

McClellan said, "Some types of grasshoppers are a serious threat to Alberta's crops. They have voracious appetites and move where the crops are, potentially devastating the fields they infest. This program was designed to help producers in the most severely affected areas.

"We recognize that producers in the most severely infested areas are only just beginning to recover this year from the extraordinary pressures of continuous and record breaking drought. However, in future years, the program may only be available when extraordinary events warrant its consideration."

She added that this program wouldn't have been available prior to the signing of the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF). "The framework has allowed the federal and provincial governments to work together to help Alberta's producers."

Record numbers of grasshoppers in 2002 meant that an extremely high number of eggs were laid in the fall of 2002. The record number of eggs, combined with ideal hatching conditions over the past two weeks, has significantly increased the potential for grasshopper damage. Damage from grasshoppers, if left unchecked, could cause $80 to $100 million in crop loss.

The 2003 Canada-Alberta Grasshopper Control Program will provide Alberta producers with up to $4 per treated acre to use towards grasshopper control. Depending on the method of control used, the program could cover approximately one-third

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of farmers' costs for grasshopper control. Producers should contact the toll free Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677 or the Rural Services Division at (780) 422-9167 to find out if they are in an area of severe or very severe infestation. For toll-free access outside of the Edmonton area, dial 310-0000 first.

The federal portion of the $10.5 million program is part of funds allocated to Alberta under the APF as transition funding. Producers can get applications by calling the Rural Services Division, or by accessing the Alberta Agriculture web site www.agric.gov.ab.ca.

Additional information and a grasshopper forecast map are posted to the Alberta Agriculture web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca.

Contact: John Knapp
Director, Rural Services Division
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-9167

Media Relations
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Ottawa
(613) 759-7972

McClellan to attend Montana-Alberta Agriculture Opportunities conference

Livestock, animal health, crop production, marketing and trade will be topics of discussion at the third Montana-Alberta Agriculture Opportunities Conference in Great Falls Montana on June 16 and 17, 2003.

The conference focuses on working in partnership to enhance two-way trade. The conference is co-hosted by Ralph Peck, Director for the Montana Department of Agriculture and Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Department officials, and key agriculture leaders from both sides of the border will be attending the conference.

"This conference will give Alberta an opportunity to further nurture our relationship with one of our closest trading partners – the state of Montana," McClellan said. "Of course, the recent Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy situation has caused some concerns with our Montana partners, but this conference will give us a chance to allay any unease about the safety of Alberta's cattle and beef industry."

Also in attendance at conference will be the Governor and Lieutenant Governor of Montana, United States Department of Agriculture officials, and Canadian Food Inspection Agency officials. Approximately 150 registrants are expected to attend. The total cost of the trip will be $1,875.

Contact: Annalisa Baer – Manager
Bilateral Relations and Strategic Initiatives
Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 427-4148

Terry Willock
Communications Director
Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-7683

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

Grazing legumes and bloat

Bloat is a concern when grazing some legumes. While not all legumes cause bloat, the legumes that can include alfalfa, sweet clover, red clover, alsike clover and white clover. The non-bloat causing legumes are bird's-foot trefoil, sainfoin and cicer milk vetch.

"Legumes usually cause a frothy bloat," says Russel Horvey, beef/forage specialist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "Understanding frothy bloat and how it is caused may help producers understand bloat control on legume pastures."

Frothy bloat results from the quick degradation and fermentation of plant material and rapid release of plant cell material. This material traps fermentation gases in a thick foam. The foam prevents the animal from being able to burp up the gases. The accumulation of trapped gases in the rumen can lead to the animal's death.

"Legumes that degrade quickly are those of higher quality, typical of young rapidly growing plants," adds Horvey. "Inversely, legumes that degrade more slowly are those of lower quality or higher in fiber content, usually associated with more mature plants."

Forage maturity is the most significant contributing factor in pasture bloat. The highest risk of bloat occurs when legumes are in the pre-bud or vegetative stage. As the plants mature the risk of bloat declines, this is because the fiber content in the plant increases as the plant matures and therefore breaks down more slowly in the rumen.

Ten management tips to reduce the risk of bloat:

1. Use non-bloating legumes – cicer milk-vetch, sainfoin and bird's-foot trefoil.
2. Use low-bloat potential alfalfa, such as AC Grazeland – this variety of alfalfa results in a slower initial rate of digestion, which helps prevent the onset of bloat.
3. Use legume-grass mixtures – generally grasses do not degrade as quickly as legumes.
4. Use ionophore products to reduce the risk of bloat.

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5. Never move hungry ruminants into legume pastures in the morning. Cattle graze the heaviest in the morning.
6. Put animals out to pasture when the plants are dry, water tends to speed up the rate of digestion.
7. Feed another source of dry roughage (long fiber) before grazing a bloat-causing legume pasture.
8. Maintain a uniform and regular intake of legume forages. Once cattle have started grazing, leave them on the pasture, even at night.
9. When animals are first put on pasture, check them at least twice a day. Some animals are chronic bloaters and may need to be removed from the pasture.
10. Graze full bloom mature plants.

More details on this topic are available in the Agri-Facts publication ***Feeding Legumes to Cattle*** (Agdex 420/62-1). Copies of this free factsheet are available from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 or by calling toll free in Alberta 1-800-292-5697 or e-mail: publications.office@gov.ab.ca.

Contact: Russel Horvey
1-866-882-7677

Alberta Ag-Info Centre
1-866-882-7677

Successful winter wheat production linked to direct seeding

Winter wheat is not a new crop, but with growing interest in its connection to direct seeding, it has begun a renewed climb to notoriety among a new group of farmers who understand the payoff in less tillage. Some major agronomic improvements for growing quality wheat in Alberta are linked to direct seeding, a somewhat novel, but well established crop production system. The main changes involve superior winter wheat varieties and enhanced direct seeding methods.

"Growing a winter cereal is something worth looking into," says Ron Heller, agronomist with Alberta Reduced Tillage LINKAGES (RTL) program. "When combined with low disturbance direct seeding, winter wheat provides the most environmentally friendly cropping option available on the Canadian prairies. The benefits include soil erosion control, efficient soil moisture use, lower energy costs and reduced pesticide requirements. Add the potential for high quality and productivity beyond spring wheat, and a grower can receive an incremental bonus that will contribute significantly to his overall cropping plan."

The critical management approach for winter survival of wheat in a northern climate appears to be low soil disturbance at seeding to retain sufficient stubble and maximize snow trapping for cold insulation. Shallow seeding with a narrow opener will optimize this goal.

"In the Parkland zone of Alberta, winter wheat needs to be seeded shallow and early in September into standing stubble Direct seeding accommodates this with a quick turn-around time for seeding on the heels of harvest," says Heller. He adds that the biggest challenge seems to be deciding what to seed ahead of the winter wheat to ensure a timely outcome. "Cereal silage, green feed crops, or early-seeded canola can provide adequate stubble and harvest opportunity to get the winter wheat into the ground for success. Chem-fallow is an option when it fits, and I know growers who say that pea stubble works well, too."

The modern winter wheat prairie varieties have been selected for shorter, stronger straw that allows the use of higher nitrogen fertilizer rates to achieve higher grain protein and yield without lodging. Because of its very active and early spring growth habit, winter wheat responds tremendously well to soil nitrogen. "This works well with our advanced direct seeding technology that can place seed and fertilizer in precisely the amounts and location suited for the crop being planted. I have not observed any problems with a good double-shoot direct seeding system. In terms of fertilizer efficiency, it may be an improvement over a spring broadcast application," explains Heller.

The 2002-2003 growing season in northeast Alberta seems to be off to a good start with some very promising fields of winter wheat, notes Heller. "No other crop responds better to shallow seeding into standing stubble than winter wheat, even if it is quite dry in the fall," he says. Costs are the same for fall seeding as they are for springtime seeding, but the change offers an opportunity to offset the recurring challenges in spring cereal production. Winter hardiness along with disruption to weed, insect and disease cycles, lets average year-to-year yields of winter wheat rival those of traditional spring wheat growing areas.

"Many growers escape the need for a wild oat herbicide in winter wheat and enjoy an early harvest, two favorable outcomes that come to mind," continues Heller. "I am pleasantly surprised every spring as I observe the performance of this crop. I think farmers who try it for the first time will be too. Winter wheat is typically growing green above the stubble by the middle of May and is ready for combine harvesting by the middle of August."

Good production information and support are available through the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission. Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) programs and services also promote winter wheat. As part of its mandate, the RTL program can put growers in touch with these organizations. There is a *Winter Wheat Forum* link on the RTL web site at www.reducedtillage.ca.

"Of interest to some producers may be the growing list of varieties that are now on special contract through the Canadian Wheat Board," says Heller. "Plant breeders are working hard to

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bring quality milling traits into winter wheat. We know it can be grown successfully around here and more production is needed to really catch the attention of the markets."

Farmers are welcome to contact RTL for more information about winter wheat and direct seeding.

Contact: *Ron Heller*
(780) 853-8262

Creativity adds punch to promotions

Many farm direct agri-preneurs know that word of mouth is the best way to sell a product but they also wonder what else can be done to build farm gate sales.

As Jane Eckert, a farm direct marketing consultant from Missouri says, "opportunities are not only in front of us, they are beside us and behind us." There may be a need to look beyond the industry for ideas and tweak them to work in a farm direct operation.

Know your buyers – identify target customers and meet their specific needs. 'Everyone' is not your customer and 'you' aren't your customer either!

Build a better brochure – include the benefits that products offer to your customer, not just their features. What makes your products unique and sets them apart from all the other choices? Tell your story and allow customers to establish an emotional link to you through your product. Include a product description and price list in the brochure, along with your name, phone number and a map to the farm.

Think outside the box – do an environmental scan of the rural community to identify potential marketing opportunities. Talk to people, read the paper and stay up to date on global events because they can impact business. It's important to understand consumer trends and know how to apply them to your business.

Networking works – develop networks and be active in the business community. Join the Chamber of Commerce or a service club. Have a business 'infomercial' ready to deliver to each new person you meet. Tell them who you are, where you are, what you're doing and how it will benefit them. Leave a brochure or business card with them to take home.

Establish alliances with other entrepreneurs – find out who the popular caterers are in your community and make sure you're their preferred meat supplier. Get involved in community events that attract your target customers and make sure you go armed with a supply of promotional materials.

Cross promote with like-minded agri-preneurs – identify a business with a similar target market and business philosophy and complementary product or service. Then join forces to promote each other's products. It could be a bed and breakfast that features local farm direct bison meat on their dinner menu or includes your brochure in their guest check-in package. In turn, the farm direct business can include the B&B brochure in each of their meat sales. Develop an annual promotional plan and stick to it.

Agri-preneurs who would like to know more about enhancing their farm direct business are welcome to check out the Agri-preneurs who would like to know more about enhancing their farm direct business are welcome to check out the ***Farm Direct Marketing Quality Meat Products Direct to the Consumer Checklist*** on-line at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa5132.

For more information on promotional strategies or farm direct marketing, call Karen Goad, Ag-Entrepreneurship Division, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Grande Prairie at (780) 538-5629.

Contact: *Karen Goad*
(780) 538-5629
e-mail: karen.goad@gov.ab.ca

2003 Livestock Evaluation Seminar

From June 2 to 4, 2003, three Alberta 4-H members joined 32 other delegates in Calgary to take part in the ***2003 Livestock Evaluation Seminar***. During this three-day event, delegates learned about the live steer to carcass relationship, the meat grading system, feedlot cattle evaluations and bull testing. In addition, the program toured a purebred operation, XL Meats and Olds College.

Hosted by the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede, the seminar focused on enhancing the judging skills of the participants involved in both the formal and informal settings of livestock shows, feedlot management and commercial and purebred cattle operations. "The seminar was very informative," comments Mark Shand, provincial 4-H programs specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "Everyone involved improved their ability to evaluate livestock and determine the traits necessary for improving breeding stock and carcass quality."

Delegates were privileged to be under the instruction of Dr. J. Edwards and Dr. J. D. Tatum. Edwards is the vice president at Express Ranches in Yukon, Oklahoma, who received his Ph.D. in animal science from Kansas State University in 1979. Since then he has been an invited speaker and organizer of many national and international beef and cattle conferences worldwide. Tatum is a professor of animal science at Colorado State University. He is member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Animal Science* and has served as president of the National Livestock Grading and

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Marketing Association as well as president of the Intercollegiate Meat Coaches Association. Tatum continues research for the livestock and meat industries.

4-H delegates were invited to attend this seminar based on their performance at the Provincial 4-H Judging Competition last year. This year's Alberta 4-H delegates were Gina Grabler of Barrhead, Nicole McRobert of Clandonald and Jennifer Wakefield of Coronation, along with their chaperone Mark Shand. ATB Financial, Calgary Stampede and UFA are 4-H sponsors for this event and their support is greatly appreciated.

For more information about 4-H, visit the 4-H web site at www.4h.ab.ca or contact the Provincial 4-H Office at (780) 422-4H4H.

Contact: Hannah Davis *Mark Shand*
(780) 427-4462 *(403) 948-8508*

Agri-News Briefs

Swine technology workshop

The 5th annual ***Red Deer Swine Technology Workshop*** is being held in Red Deer at the Harvest Centre, on the Westerner grounds on October 28th and 29th, 2003. This workshop focuses on production issues that are relevant to owner/operators, stock people and farm managers. The program includes a tradeshow and provides a venue for the Western Canadian swine industry to come together and share ideas. The program includes presentations by Dr. Todd Stumpf with Cotswold Swine Genetics in Minnesota, speaking on gilt management; producers discussing their experiences with finishing pigs in large groups; George Morris Center's Kevin Grier discussing markets and Dr. Terry Whiting, a veterinarian with Manitoba Agriculture, discussing animal transportation. This program is a joint venture among the pork industry, Alberta Pork and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The workshop is sponsored by many of the businesses serving the pork industry. For more information contact Michelle Follensbee at (780) 415-0828, e-mail: michelle.follensbee@gov.ab.ca or Shirley Sommert-Ogden at (780) 427-5320 e-mail: shirley.sommert-ogden@gov.ab.ca.

Winter cereal demonstrations

Alberta Reduced Tillage LINKAGES and Ducks Unlimited, in partnership with other organizations, have planned two demonstration events for June 23, 2003. Starting at 9:00 a.m., a field day is planned at the Lethbridge Research Station. In conjunction with the Canadian Wheat Board and the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission, this event will focus on winter wheat and other winter cereals. Time will also be spent discussing winter cereal agronomy and CWRW varieties and seeding trials. Then, at 1:30 p.m., with help from partners Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the Southern Applied Research Association, a Crop Walk is planned at Southern Agri Services Ltd., Magrath. During the walk, participants will see how late seeded winter wheat and winter triticale compare to crops planted on early seeding dates and will also see whether seeding rates make a difference. Both events are free. For further information, contact Susanne Brummelhuis, DUC, at (403) 362-4827, Brooks, or Don Wentz, agrologist with RT LINKAGES, (403) 381-5845, Lethbridge.

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Agri-News

June 30, 2003

Canola productivity and lygus bugs

From 1996 to 1998, Alberta experienced an unprecedented lygus bug outbreak. Well over a million acres of canola were sprayed to control lygus. A research team, formed to investigate canola's ability to compensate for herbivore damage, has found crucial information for the management of lygus bugs. In recent studies completed under the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute's Farming for the Future Matching Grants Program, entomologists and agronomists determined that insecticidal control of lygus bugs during early growth stages of canola is not a prudent strategy.

"In experiments at Beaverlodge, Lethbridge and Ellerslie, conducted in conjunction with our colleagues at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, we found that canola plants infested with lygus bugs were more productive," says Jim Jones, entomologist now with the Western Pest Management Company Ltd. of Sherwood Park, and the project's principal researcher. "Even under the drought conditions at Lethbridge and Ellerslie during 2000 and 2001, canola compensated for bud loss. We found that lygus bug feeding during the bud through flowering stages in canola did not result in significant yield losses and so we do not advise insecticide treatment for control of lygus in canola during bud and early flowering stages, particularly. In our experiments, lygus did not pose a threat to canola yields."

This research studied plant architecture, seed yield and other vegetative and reproductive attributes potentially involved in compensation. The density and duration of lygus bug infestation during the bud through bloom period were manipulated in separate experiments conducted by three research teams working at different sites. At bud stage, plants were individually caged and density treatments or duration treatments were applied. At harvest, plants from these experiments were retrieved for measures of stature and feeding damage. Yields were measured by seed size. The research found that canola plants had no significant yield losses in lygus bug density experiments, although a significant increase in small seed weight occurred in the duration experiments.

"These experiments showed that plants became more robust with increased lygus density," comments Ross McKenzie, senior research scientist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and agronomy program leader, Lethbridge. "Canola stem diameter, biomass and branching were significantly increased by lygus treatments."

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In some cases, total seed weight increased. Seed production in high-density lygus treatments more than doubled. In most cases, however, yields were not significantly affected either by the number of lygus per plant or by the number of days they fed on the plants. No negative effects on plant productivity were found.

"These are defensive responses induced in canola by lygus feeding and we found they were agronomically positive," says Jones. "Yield losses were not found, although yield increases sometimes occurred. Bud 'blast' (the abortion of buds, flowers or small pods after lygus feeding) was not a useful indicator of potential yield since significant losses in buds and pods occurred both when yields were improved and when no changes in yield could be detected."

Early-season populations of lygus bugs are not pests – their feeding benefits canola plants through the release of apical.

Contact: Jim Jones
(780) 467-7790

Dr. Ross McKenzie
(403) 381-5842

Agricultural leaders work on border challenges and animal disease issues

Animal disease issues and the movement of livestock across the U.S.-Canada border were prominent during the third Montana-Alberta Agricultural Opportunities conference on June 16 and 17, 2003.

Agricultural leaders who attended the conference expressed their belief that the investigation in the Province of Alberta of a single cow with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) is moving forward well. Cooperation among all partners on many issues will be critical in the coming months and years.

The more than 100 agricultural leaders attending the conference also talked about country of origin labeling, currency exchange rates, crop pesticide registrations, biotechnology and the transportation of agricultural commodities to markets.

The conference, held every two years, is sponsored by the Montana Department of Agriculture and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Participants come together to discuss issues of concern, as well as areas of cooperation and collaboration.

"We in Montana and Alberta have many things in common. Although we have some new challenges – notably BSE and the additional border concerns posed by Homeland Security – producers and consumers on both sides of the border benefit from a free and fair trade," said Ralph Peck, Director of the Montana Department of Agriculture.

Broyce Jacobs, MLA for Cardston-Taber-Warner – representing a large agricultural area in Alberta – said he believes we can overcome the current obstacles. "We must strive to understand each other's point of view on many issues so that we can work together for the mutual benefit of our agricultural industries." Jacobs represented Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, at the conference.

Farmers and ranchers in both countries will have to live with more people looking over their shoulders in the future, and not just governments, said Nathan Rudgers, Commissioner of the New York Department of Agriculture and Markets, and a dinner speaker at the conference.

Consumers are demanding to know how their food is grown, and supermarket buyers are responding with requests for more information from suppliers and producers, Rudgers said. Overseas buyers also want assurance that food was produced according to their specific standards.

"The day that farmers and ranchers can just grow it and sell it are probably over," he said. "The whole world is in your hair now, and getting government out of your hair probably isn't going to help you very much."

Agenda items for the conference were developed in consultation with industry groups, legislative and governmental leaders from both countries, Peck said.

Conference proceedings and agreements for future work will be posted on the Montana Department of Agriculture Web site at www.agr.state.mt.us, and on the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca.

Contact: Annalisa Baer
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'Fight the bite' *with personal insect repellents*

Albertans who live in rural areas and on farms spend a lot of time out of doors and in areas where mosquitoes can be abundant. West Nile virus is transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. The best way of reducing the risk of infection is to avoid contact with mosquitoes. Personal insect repellents can help you do that.

Safety tips for using insect repellents

- Always read the entire product label carefully and use according to instructions.
- Apply the repellent sparingly on exposed skin and on top of clothing. It's not necessary to use repellent under treated clothes. Heavy application is unnecessary for protection. Repeat application only as needed.
- If you get repellent in your eyes, rinse immediately with water. Do not use the repellent on open wounds or if your skin is irritated or sunburned.
- Use spray repellents only in well-ventilated areas, and avoid inhaling spray. Do not use near food.
- Wash treated skin with soap and water when you return indoors.
- To check sensitivity to a product, apply it to a small area of skin on your arm and wait 24 hours to see if a reaction occurs.

General precautions for children

- Store all insect repellent containers out of children's reach.
- Always supervise the application of repellent on children.
- Avoid applying repellent to children's faces and hands.
- In case of skin irritation, stop using the product immediately, wash treated skin and seek medical attention. In case of accidental poisoning, follow first aid instructions on the product container and seek medical attention. Take the container with you when you seek medical attention.

Choosing a product

- If you won't be outdoors for long, choose a product with a lower concentration of repellent (shorter protection time) and reapply only if necessary.
- Use only personal insect repellents that are registered for use in Canada. They have a registration number granted under the *Pest Control Products Act* and are labeled as insect repellents for use on humans. Never use a product labeled as an insecticide on your body.
- Registered personal insect repellents in Canada contain one of five different active ingredients: DEET, P-menthane 3,8-diol, soybean oil, citronella or lavender. The active ingredient, its concentration, protection times and use instructions are listed on each product label.

Repellents containing DEET

Using the latest health protection standards, DEET was re-evaluated in 2001 to ensure continued acceptable use and extra protection for children. DEET-based repellents at various concentrations offer different protection times. Examples of protection times based on DEET concentrations are:

- 30% DEET – six hours of protection
- 15% DEET – five hours
- 10% DEET – three hours
- 5% DEET – two hours

DEET use on children up to 12 years

- Do not use DEET on children under six-months of age.

Six months to two years

- The use of one application per day may be considered in situations where a high risk of complications from insect bites exist
- Apply the product sparingly and not to the face and hands
- Only use 10% DEET or less.
- Avoid prolonged use.

Two to 12 years

- Apply 10% DEET or less no more than three times daily.
- Avoid prolonged use.

Other considerations when using DEET products

There is no indication that DEET use by pregnant or lactating women is hazardous to the unborn or nursing child. However, non-chemical methods to reduce mosquito bites (protective clothing, avoiding mosquito habitat during times of peak mosquito activity) could be considered.

Since no immediate health concerns were identified during the re-evaluation of DEET, retail sales of products that contain DEET at concentrations above 30 per cent can continue until December 31, 2004. This phase-out will allow existing products to be used up, thereby preventing disposal problems. If you have concerns regarding higher-concentration DEET products (cream, liquid or pump spray) you have around the home, dispose of them with your regular household garbage. Consult municipal authorities concerning the disposal of aerosol sprays. Otherwise you can continue to use any products you have that contain a greater than 30 per cent concentration of DEET on adults or children 12-years of age or older, occasionally and according to label directions (apply sparingly and only as required). These should not be used for long periods (daily use for several weeks).

Some personal insect repellent products contain sunscreen compounds. Because of the incompatible label instructions regarding methods of application, i.e., insect repellents should be applied sparingly while sunscreens should be applied

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liberally and frequently, insect repellent/sunscreen combination products should be used solely as insect repellents, and be applied according to the safe practices listed above.

- **P-menthane 3,8-diol** – a product containing this active ingredient was recently registered in Canada and meets all modern safety standards. It provides up to two hours of protection against mosquitoes. Do not use it on children under three-years old.
- **Soybean oil** – registered products containing soybean oil provide between 1.0 and 3.5 hours of protection against mosquitoes, depending on the product. Products containing soybean oil were recently registered and meet all modern safety standards.
- **Citronella and lavender** – registered products containing citronella provide protection for 30 minutes to two hours. The registered lavender product provides about 30 minutes of protection. Citronella and lavender products should not used on infants and toddlers under two-years of age. Citronella-based products appear to be potential skin sensitizers and can cause allergic reactions in some individuals.

Other ways to avoid mosquito bites

When mosquitoes are most active, in the evenings, dusk and dawn, or in places such as ravines and shady areas, it may be advisable to use an insect repellent containing DEET and wear long-sleeved shirts and pants. Light coloured clothing is less attractive to mosquitoes.

Also, make sure that door and window screens in your home fit tightly and have no holes in them. Homeowners can reduce mosquito hatching sites significantly on their property by eliminating standing water.

Further information and factsheets on West Nile virus are available on the Alberta Government web site at www.gov.ab.ca.

Contact: John Tuckwell
(780) 427-7164

Canadian opportunities in Ukraine through the FARM program

Some good news for the Ukrainian agriculture sector and Canadian organizations interested in participating in this sector's development – the Facility for Agricultural Reform and Modernization or FARM Program is now underway. A five-year program, FARM is providing valuable and much needed assistance to update practices and strengthen institutions and organizations belonging to Ukraine's agriculture sector. Also viewed as a strategic initiative, FARM will position Canada as a key player in the meaningful transition of Ukraine from a command-and-control to a market based economy, while at the same time, opening up this market to Canadian agriculture supply and equipment exporters.

With major funding from Canada's International Development Agency (CIDA) in partnership with the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba and the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership (STEP), FARM will leverage the wealth and breadth of leading edge Canadian agricultural technology and expertise and supply this Ukraine's developing agriculture sector. To achieve this, FARM focuses its efforts on three pillars - strengthening institutional capacity, agriculture extension network expansion and civil society development. FARM's major partners in Ukraine include the Ministry of Agrarian Policy, Ukraine Academy of Agrarian Sciences, and National Agricultural University of Ukraine, as well as the administrative regions of Dnipropetrovsk, Rivne, Sumy, and Volyn.

FARM will work through two major components. The first, called the Proactive Mechanism, provides technical support to the four priority oblasts mentioned above, as well as other oblasts through FARM's partnership with the Kyiv-based Training and Coordination Centre for Agricultural Extension Services.

The second component, named ***ReMech*** or the Responsive Mechanism, is a grant fund that is open to Canadian and Ukrainian organizations interested in becoming active participants in Ukraine's agriculture development. Organizations with innovative ideas for support to FARM's three pillars are encouraged to apply. They must do so, however, in partnership with an organization from the other country. The first step is to send FARM a brief two-page concept paper outlining the idea. Following an evaluation period, eligible partner organizations with project concepts that fit FARM's mandate will be invited to develop a proposal. Key success factors to obtaining ***ReMech*** funding will be innovative and appropriate ideas from organizations capable of developing and delivering the project.

Interested parties seeking more information about FARM may visit the web site at www.sasktrade.sk.ca/farm for specific project details. In addition to a more extensive project overview, organizations will be able to download ***ReMech*** project criteria and a concept paper outline from this site.

Contact: STEP
(306) 787-7977
e-mail: farm@sasktrade.sk.ca

Alberta Approved Farmers' Markets – a positive outlook

Farmers' markets in Alberta have a long history. In 1973, the Alberta Department of Agriculture established a program to aid in the development of farmers' markets in the province. In 1974, the first full season, 16 markets were opened. Today, there are over 100 Approved Markets operating in Alberta.

Benefits of Selling...and Buying

Vendors can benefit in a number of ways by selling through a farmers' market. "Farmers' markets offer vendors the opportunity to sell their products outside the traditional distribution outlets," says Eileen Kotowich with the Ag-Entrepreneurship Division of Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Vermilion. "They don't have to produce the volumes that would be required if they were selling into a traditional distribution system. Vendors receive immediate payment for their products, helping to alleviate cash flow problems. Vendors also meet their customers, giving them the opportunity to build relationships, talk about their products and educate consumers about farming."

Consumers shop at Alberta Approved Farmers' Markets for a number of reasons. The three main reasons cited in the 2002 study conducted by the Alberta Farmers' Market Association (AFMA) are freshness of the products, quality of the products and support of the local farmers. Farmers' markets present a win-win situation for both vendors and consumers.

How much money is spent at the Market?

The 2002 study noted that the majority of consumers (64 per cent) are spending up to $30 at the Market. Vendors are also buying from other vendors with just over 70 per cent spending up to $20.

Economic Spin-off From Markets

"Looking outside the Market, the community also benefits from having an Alberta Approved Farmers' Market in town," adds Kotowich. "Nearly 85 per cent of consumers will spend some money in town on market day. The majority of vendors also spend money in town on market day on shopping, gas, other automotive supplies, and eating, both restaurant and fast food."

An additional economic spin-off is the employment of additional staff. It is true that the majority of vendors are owner-operators. However, 38 per cent of vendors have additional employees, with 29 per cent of those employees being non-family members.

AFMA recently released the results from the 2002 vendor and consumer study. This comprehensive study resulted in vendor and consumer profiles as well as an economic impact analysis. To receive a copy of the 2002 survey results, contact the Alberta Farmers' Market Association at Box 156, Red Deer, Alberta, T4N 5E8. The survey is free to AFMA members, $50 to Alberta non-members and $100 to non-members outside Alberta.

Contact: *Eileen Kotowich*
(780) 853-8223

3rd annual Leader of the Year Award *program kicks off*

The Co-operators and the Canadian 4-H Council have launched the third annual The Co-operators/4-H National Volunteer Leader of the Year Award. The award was established in 2001 through a partnership between The Co-operators and Canadian 4-H Council to celebrate the United Nations' International Year of Volunteers. Due to overwhelming response to the award, the two organizations decided to offer it as an annual program.

"Volunteers are our most precious resource," said Elizabeth Crouse, president of the Canadian 4-H Council. "4-H makes a positive and long-lasting impact on its members thanks to the dedication and commitment of volunteer leaders. These are heroes in our communities who step forward to give their time and energy for the benefit of our children and youth."

Ten provincial winners will be declared, and from these a national winner will be drawn in a lottery. Provincial winners will be awarded a certificate, $100 cash prize, and The Co-operators and 4-H merchandise. The Grand Prize is a $1,100 cash award and a trip to the National 4-H Conference in Toronto in November 2003.

More than 32,000 4-H members across the country depend on more than 9,500 volunteer leaders to run clubs and oversee projects. 4-H is Canada's largest rural-based youth development organization, with more than 2,600 active clubs from coast-to-coast. The year 2003 marks the 90th Anniversary of 4-H in Canada.

Visit www.4-h-canada.ca to download nomination forms. Applications must be received by midnight, August 2, 2003.

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Hort Congress

The Alberta Horticultural Congress is scheduled for November 13 and 14, 2003 at the Mayfield Inn, Edmonton. Two of the speakers planned for this year's Congress are Mark Cullen, well-known radio and television personality (Home and Garden Television) and author of *Canadian Garden Design* and *The New Greener Thumb,* and Michael Kerr, who will open the Congress with his presentation *Humor in the Workplace*. For further information, contact Shirley Alton, Congress coordinator, at (780) 998-7586 or toll free at 1-877-998-2782. Additional information on the Hort Congress will be posted on the web site as it becomes available, www.albertahortcongress.com.

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Agri-News

July 7, 2003

The heavy harrow: is it useful

Is the heavy harrow a useful implement or an expensive piece of equipment that doesn't pay for itself? In these days of continual cost cutting the heavy harrow is the subject of discussion with strong feelings being displayed, both for and against its use.

"In the Peace region and, I suspect, in many other parts of Alberta, farmers continue to ask if it is worthwhile to heavy harrow," says Nick Underwood P.Ag. C.C.A., Reduced Tillage Linkages Agronomist, Peace Region. "I have seen some cost figures attributed to the task which are questionable. I don't want to get into detail about the cost, but I will say that I believe the operation can be done for less than $3 per acre. At that cost, a 70-foot heavy harrow with a tractor to pull it at 10 m.p.h. is earning/costing $240 per hour."

Gary Ropchan, agronomist at the Central Peace Conservation Society (CPCS), started doing trials in 2001 to evaluate the benefits from using a heavy harrow in a zero till seeding system. In 2001, the trial was done on canola and in 2002, the trial was done on barley, peas, canola and wheat. Findings so far show an economic disadvantage to using the heavy harrow. This appears to be for two reasons; the cost of the heavy harrowing and the fact that heavy harrowing didn't have a positive effect on yield. CPCS is continuing the trials in 2003.

"To find out whether a yield increase could be expected from heavy harrowing and if there were reasons to continue this practice, I talked to three farmers in the Peace to find out if they use a heavy harrow, and why," adds Underwood. "Together these three farmers farm almost 10,000 acres with at least 100 kilometres distance between them. Their soils vary. None of these direct seeders identified an expected yield increase as the reason that they used a heavy harrow. However, they all felt that the operation helped to provide the seeding conditions that they wanted. This implies that there is an expected yield benefit."

One of these farmers is from the Fairview area and he commented that he likes to spread the straw in the spring to stop it sticking to the mud. In wheat stubble that received pre-harvest glyphosate, heavy harrowing is helpful to the seeding operation because it eliminates sprayer tracks that can cause plugging. The harrowing makes the land more ready for the seeder. In heavy canola crops that leave an abundance of chaff, heavy harrowing after harvest spreads that chaff more evenly than the chaff spreader on the combine. After seeding (with a three-inch stealth opener) he has tried heavy harrowing to get an even mat of straw, which helps to prevent drying in the seed row. He feels that helped this year anyway.

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The farmer from the Debolt area feels that it is very important to have a mellow layer of mulch on the surface at seeding. He applies NH^3 in the fall with 3/4-inch knives on a 12-inch spacing in a different direction to the planned seeding. In the spring he heavy harrows and then seeds.

In the Hythe and Wembley areas, the third farmer interviewed says he also likes to see loose mulch on the surface to help 'seal it up' to reduce moisture loss. He also bands NH^3 in the fall. He farms a wide variety of soils and feels that some might not benefit from the operation. Heavy harrowing is a spring job for him and a very important reason for doing it is to level out tracks from the previous year's spraying and harvesting operations. These tracks can cause seed to be left stranded on the surface or at the wrong depth, and they also make the seeding operation more stressful.

"What CPCS is attempting to find out is whether or not there are financial benefits to heavy harrowing; however, this may be a mute point," says Underwood. "As an owner of a heavy harrow myself I find that it has its uses and has gotten me out of a jam, at low cost, several times. Having a level seedbed to seed into is very important. It may be difficult to prove that a level field is going to yield higher than a rough field, but I sure know which one I would rather harvest!"

For further information, contact Underwood at (780) 814-1232 or e-mail uwlltd@telusplanet.net.

Contact: *Nick Underwood P.Ag. C.C.A.*
(780) 814-1232

AFMA releases survey results

The Alberta Farmers' Market Association (AFMA) recently released the results from vendor and consumer surveys completed in 2002. The surveys were comprehensive, resulting in vendor and consumer profiles, and included an economic impact analysis. Sixty-four of the 111 Alberta Approved Farmers' Markets were surveyed. Vendors and consumers were surveyed three times in 2002 with data being collected from spring, summer and fall/Christmas markets. The survey included completed questionnaires from 6,069 randomly selected consumers and 2,545 vendors.

Vendor & Consumer Profiles

Vendors are predominately female (71 per cent) who are aged 55 or older (37.5 per cent). A large number (42 per cent) have been vending for more than five years. This verifies the concerns voiced by market managers and vendors that it is difficult to attract younger vendors into the markets.

Consumers are also primarily female (76 per cent) with a high level of education. The majority of respondents (57 per cent) indicated their family income is greater than $55,000 per year. The survey found that consumers with greater disposable income were more likely to spend in ways where quality and value outweighed a concern about cost.

Consumer Motivation

"What motivates consumers to shop at Alberta Approved Farmers' Markets is important," says Eileen Kotowich, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Agri-preneur Action Unit, Vermilion. "It identifies trends in shopping behaviour and also indicates opportunities for farm direct marketers."

The top five reasons noted are:

- product freshness
- product quality
- support of the local farmer
- community support
- social atmosphere

"It is interesting to note that the five top reasons for shopping at an Alberta Approved Farmers' Market are the same as noted in the 1996 survey," adds Kotowich. "These trends are also seen in the U.S. Gail Hayden, executive director of the California Farmers' Markets Association spoke at the North American Farm Direct Marketing Association conference recently held in Charlotte, North Carolina. She noted that people attend farmers' market in her state for product freshness and quality, in order to buy directly from the farmer and because of the markets' social atmosphere.

"These are very positive findings. Consumers are buying fresh, quality products from local farmers. They enjoy the unique atmosphere of the market because it gives them a chance to socialize and be part of the farming community by supporting the local farmers. This indicates that Alberta Approved Farmers' Markets are an important market outlet in the communities they serve."

To receive a copy of these survey results, contact the AFMA at Box 156, Red Deer, Alberta, T4N 5E8. The survey is free to AFMA members, $50 to Alberta non-members and $100 to non-members outside Alberta.

Contact: *Eileen Kotowich*
(780) 853-8223

4-H Junior & Intermediate Camps 2003 Fun in the Sun at 4-H Summer Camps

Approximately 800 junior and intermediate 4-H members are gearing up for an unforgettable camp experience. Through self-improvement sessions, delegates will have a fun-filled summer of self-discovery that focuses on leadership, communication and decision-making. They will also take part in challenging activities to learn about issues within 4-H, agriculture and the environment. ***Uncovering the Mystery*** is this year's summer theme that gives delegates the chance to discover the incredible opportunities that 4-H has to offer.

First on the scene will be the theme that motivates junior campers aged 9 to 11 as they begin their 4-H summer camping experience. Junior camps provide delegates with the opportunity to learn about their strengths, weaknesses, limits and boundaries. In addition, delegates will increase decision-making skills, self-confidence and self-esteem through group interaction and enjoy a fun-filled atmosphere of group games, skill sessions and high-energy activities. This first exposure to 4-H camp will set the base for an outstanding 4-H career.

Delegate's aged 10 to 13 will be ***Picking up the Trail*** at combined camps. The extreme challenges and obstacles at combined programs will encourage delegates to learn more about themselves and unknown opportunities that lie before them. The skills that delegates "pick up" at these camps will aid them in their personal endeavors and lifelong journey.

Intermediate campers aged 12 to 14 will be ***Cracking the Code*** as they become more involved with the program by planning and facilitating games throughout the camp. Camps are structured to enhance views on global issues and promote opportunities at the senior 4-H level. Here, delegates begin to decode new aspects of 4-H and themselves as principles and strategies for leadership, teamwork and decision-making will be deciphered. Furthermore, intermediate campers prepare to take positive risks as they extend the boundaries of their skills and knowledge.

Sponsored by Anadarko Canada Corporation, Gas Alberta Inc., Peavey Mart and TransCanada Transmission, a total of 13 junior and intermediate camps will be offered to build on delegates' knowledge, aspirations, skills and attitudes. Various provincial and regional camps are located at Elkwater near Medicine Hat, Alberta 4-H Centre near Wetaskiwin, Moose Lake near Bonnyville, Camp Mackinicolea near Westlock and Camp Artiban near Peace River.

For more information about 4-H, visit www.4h.ab.ca or contact the Provincial 4-H Office at (780) 422-4H4H.

Contact: *Hannah Davis*
(780) 427-4462
Kyla Stott-Jess
(403) 948-8548
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(403) 948-8548

Customer-friendly farm direct marketing

"More than just buying produce or processed goods, farm direct marketing businesses and Farmers' Markets can be a wonderful experience that will bring customers back again and again and have them enthusiastically telling others about the operation," says Kerry Engel, Farm Direct Marketing Initiative, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock.

Here is a quick checklist of things farm direct marketers and those running farmers' markets may want to consider.

Do you have:

- a friendly smile when customers visit
- a salesperson who is knowledgeable of the products you are selling
- large signs that name the types of products that are for sale
- a parking area designated *Customer Parking*
- regular hours of operation and signage to indicate same
- a clean washroom that customers can use
- a trash barrel where customers can pitch their trash
- a guest book that people can sign, provide comments and provide their e-mail address and telephone number
- a bench or chairs where older persons can sit down and relax
- baskets that customers can carry to gather the products they want to buy
- a cash register with lots of change on hand
- sheets with recipes and your name and phone number on them to hand-out
- price stickers (buyers want to know the price)
- a large name sign at the roadside of your farm gate
- a clean, neat area where your products are displayed
- a process that ensures poor quality products are removed immediately
- a place where children can play while the buyers can look at your products (animals in pens are just great)
- a log book where you can note the names of the buyers, what they bought, when they bought it, quantity and when they have birthdays and special events
- table tops to display your produce and products
- consistency – if your sign says that you are open between 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday - make sure that it is true
- neat, well-segmented presentations of your products with clear large legible signage
- an e-mail newsletter to valued customers telling them about any news at your farm gate

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And a few things your operation shouldn't have:

- offensive barnyard odors (the biggest turn-off)
- rotting or poor-quality fruits, flowers, vegetables or value added products

For more information on the Farm Direct Marketing Initiative, the key contacts are Kerry Engel in Westlock (780) 349-4466; Karen Goad in Grande Prairie (780) 538-5629; and, Marian Williams in Camrose (780) 679-1360.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4466
Cell: (780)349-9017

Come to the Peace

Albertans love to travel. A survey done by Travel Alberta last summer found that 79 per cent of Albertans took a trip within the province.

"If you are thinking of getting out and about in the province this summer, try taking a circle tour of the Peace and enjoy the rich history and hospitality offered by the region's farm direct marketers and ag-tourism operators," says Karen Goad, Ag-Entrepreneurship Division of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Grande Prairie.

Kick off the experience with a stop at the Adam Ranch, a working bison ranch on the banks of the beautiful Smoky River near the historic community of Bezanson. Enjoy a day working along side Shelley and Brian Olfert and their ranch crew. Try horseback riding, calf roping or driving a herd of Texas Longhorns. Take in a trail ride, hike or canoe down the Smoky. Or, take the time to simply relax and observe nature and then finish off the day with a bison BBQ and hayride before heading off to an authentic ranch bunkhouse for the night.

"Continue east on Highway 43 to Grande Prairie and plan a stop at the Grande Prairie Farmers' Market, a bustling indoor market that runs every Saturday morning year round," adds Goad. "Pick up a jar of delicious Saskatoon syrup or strawberry jam prepared by local producers or snack on crunchy carrots fresh from the garden of Red Willow Gardens as you cruise the market. Round out the makings of a picnic lunch with meat and cheese from The Butcher Shop."

Then head west on Highway 2 to Beaverlodge. Take a short side trip up Saskatoon Mountain, the highest point in the south Peace. Sit down to a picnic lunch and enjoy the panoramic view.

"The next stop in this circle tour is Red Willow Gardens, a market garden southwest of Beaverlodge," says Goad. "Owners Carmen and Eric Deschipper will tour you through their prolific gardens that flourish in the gentle microclimate found on the banks of the Red Willow River. Take the time to pick your own fresh produce and shop in their wood and craft shop for a keepsake to take home."

Keep going west to Dawson Creek, BC and the start of the Alaska Highway. Have a peak at the Mile Zero monument as you head to the summer outdoor farmers' market. Plan to spend some time if you're a history buff. The market shares its site with a small art gallery and craft shop housed in an old grain elevator.

Head back to Alberta along Highway 49 to the small central Peace town of Rycroft. Stop at Briggswood Country Preserves, the first federally inspected fruit and vegetable processing facility north of Edmonton. Owner Gail Briggs and her husband, Stan, are regular vendors at both the Grande Prairie and Dawson Creek Farmers' Markets. At the end of the farm tour head to the retail area for a jar of saskatoon or black currant jam and a jar of freshly pickled carrots.

"Turn south on Highway 2 and enjoy the drive through the Saddle Hills back to Grande Prairie," says Goad. 'With the city skyline in sight, the last stop is just north of Clairmont at The Berry Basket. It's worth a stop to see this saskatoon berry harvesting, cleaning and freezing operation even if you're not traveling during the late July harvest season. Agripreneur Arnie Meyer built much of their processing line and a few well-placed questions will expand your knowledge of the industry and provide insight into the history and people of the Peace Country."

For further information on these and other farm direct marketing operations contact Goad at (780) 538-5629 or check out information on the web at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/general/agritour.nsf.

Contact: *Karen Goad*
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e-mail: karen.goad@gov.ab.ca
www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify

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Quick links for publications and more on Alberta Ag's web site

It's now easier to find publications, videos and CD-Roms on Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's web site. When looking for these agricultural information products, simply go to Alberta Agriculture's home page at http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca and click on the quick link, ***Publications & More***, in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen. This opens the listings for Alberta Agriculture's publications, videos and CD-Roms for sale, and the free publications. From the priced products catalogue, you can print an order form that can be faxed or mailed. The free publications list links to HTML and PDF pages that provide the full text for most factsheets and books. In cases where the full text is not available on-line, you can complete an order form and e-mail, fax or mail it to the Publications Office. All publications, videos and CD-Roms are available by calling the Publications Office, toll free in Canada, 1-800-292-5697 or (780) 427-0391 in the Edmonton area.

Annual crop tour

Touring the Little Red Hen Mills, an organic operation, will be very informative. Steve, Robert and Rosemary Snider, who will host the tour, have been involved in organic crop production for 17 years. Participants will have an opportunity to look at wheat, oats, rye, peas/barley and faba beans, as well as U of A research plots planted with heritage wheat varieties and some new wheat varieties from New Zealand. The tour is scheduled for July 11, 2003, starting at 1:30 p.m. The Little Red Hen Mills is located in New Norway, 8 km north of Edberg and 2 km east, or from the New Norway school drive 9.6 km east, 1.6 km south and 3 km east. For more information, call Steve Snider at (780) 855-2164, or Robert and Rosemary at (780) 855-2286, or Keri Sharpe business development officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development at (780) 427-4369.

4-H'ers celebrating Alberta's Beef Industry!

The 27th Annual Provincial 4-H Beef Heifer Show – three fun-filled days dedicated to promoting Alberta's beef industry is being held in Bashaw from July 14 to 16, 2003. Beef Heifer Show participants will take part in various competitions to demonstrate their theoretical knowledge of how to raise and care for beef animals. Delegates participate in either the Beef Project Bowl or the Beef Jeopardy or Beef Challenge in which various questions and challenges are presented. Participants also display practical skills in a variety of competitions, beginning with Team Grooming. In this event, two-person teams are given 20 minutes to clip, brush and blow-dry a beef heifer before presenting the finished animal to the judges. The Grooming Competition is followed by Showmanship classes, in which participants demonstrate their abilities to handle beef projects in the show ring. Members also take part in judging competitions, where they display their skills in assessing beef animals and abilities to pick the best animal in a given group. In the last event, professional judges assess project animals entered by participants in the Conformation classes. Sponsors of this event include Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Motor Association Insurance Company, Alberta Treasury Branches, Allan Dale Industries Ltd., American Breeders Service Global (Canada), Bashaw & District Agricultural Society, GAS Alberta Inc., Ivomec (Merial Canada Inc.), Livestock Identification Services Ltd., United Farmers of Alberta and Meyers Norris Penny. For more information about 4-H, visit the web site at www.4h.ab.ca or contact the Provincial 4-H Office at (780) 422-4H4H.

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Agri-News

July 14, 2003

FIDP and CFIP can still help with the 2002 income disaster

Many producers and farmers who had a disastrous farming year in 2002, have already applied for disaster assistance for last year.

Even though Alberta will have a new safety net program for 2003, producers can still apply for the Farm Income Disaster Program (FIDP) or the Canadian Farm Income Program (CFIP) for the 2002 crop year.

Farmers could be eligible for a payment under the FIDP and/or CFIP if they are an actively farming Alberta producer who experienced an extreme reduction in income during 2002, for reasons beyond their control. A payment under these programs is not a loan, but a compensation to help farmers cope with a disaster. There is no fee to apply for FIDP.

Farmers need to submit a FIDP application. Farmers with only one farm statement and a December 31, 2002 taxation year-end can use the simpler FIDP short form application. Corporations must complete a standard FIDP application.

The application deadline is determined by the applicant's taxation year-end. The first two pages of the application must be completed and submitted by the deadline, which is seven months after the applicant's tax year-end. If, for example, the taxation year-end for a farm operation is December 31, 2002, the producer has until July 31, 2003 to submit the first two pages of the application. If the first deadline is met, then the applicant has two more months to submit the rest of the application and schedules.

Any additional entitlements under CFIP will automatically be calculated for all FIDP applications received.

An applicant is eligible for a FIDP payment when their "claim year program margin" (the difference between allowable farm revenue and allowable farm expenses) drops below 70 per cent of their "reference margin".

A "reference margin" is the average of the three highest program margins out of the five years immediately prior to the claim year. However, if one of the previous years has already been used for a 1998 or later claim, the highest year program margin will be reduced to equal the next highest year's program margin.

Farmers can apply to AFSC for these programs. For more information, visit the website at: www.AFSC.ca or call toll free 1-800-851-5070.

Contact: Linda Gammon (403) 244-1234

This Week

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Fall marketing decisions for cow/calf producers in wake of BSE

The BSE situation has had a significant impact on the Canadian beef industry and will for some time, though longer-term effects are not yet known. Every producer (cow/calf, backgrounder, or feedlot) must develop strategies to manage their operations. Decisions on management and marketing will need to be based upon cost of production, financial risk, cash flow and facts.

"As a cow/calf operator, the first step in making management and marketing decisions will be to determine the cost of production to raise a weaned calf," says Christoph Weder, beef/forage specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Spirit River. "Based on the this past year's high winter feed costs and the longer time spent feeding, it is more important than ever that proper time be spent to determine this cost."

The following examples and charts have been prepared by experts from the three prairie provinces, Weder; Trevor Yurchak, Alberta Agriculture, Athabasca; Lorne Erickson, Alberta Agriculture, Lacombe; Bryan Doig, SAFFR Saskatchewan; and, John Popp, Manitoba Agriculture. The following example shows the cost of production and breakeven price an average cow/calf producer may have this year. To get an accurate number, producers will need to take the time to determine their own costs of production.

Cost	$/cow	Comments
Winter feed	370	210 days x $1.75/day (feed & minerals at market value)
Bedding costs	40	Assumes 1-1.5 bales per cow for last winter
Pasture	125	5 months x $25/AUM
Labor	60	
Other variables	100	Includes fuel, repairs, trucking, tilities, breeding

Total cost – $695 per cow (does not include fixed costs and depreciation)

Assume 90 per cent wean rate per cow wintered (10% for combined opens and death loss)

Total cost – $765 per calf weaned

Assume 550 pound average wean weight (shrunk, avg. of heifer and steer calves)

Breakeven price – 1.39 per lb

"Once the cost of production is determined, the next step is determining the marketing decision" adds Weder. "The marketing decision should be based on profit, risk, and cash flow and in some cases, acceptable loss that you as a manager are willing to undertake. Chart 1 shows the return at five levels of cost of production and five levels of market price.

Chart 1. Breakeven/Returns for 550 lb weaned calf

Annual Cow Costs	Calf price per lb basis $1.20	$1.10	$1.00	$0.90	$0.80
$500	$160	$105	$50	($5)	($60)
$600	$60	$5	($50)	($105)	($160)
$700	($40)	($95)	($150)	($205)	($260)
$800	($140)	($195)	($250)	($305)	($360)
$900	($240)	($295)	($350)	($405)	($460)

Based on this cost of production, at a $1.39/ lb and a market price of calves of $1.10/lb, 550 lb calves sold at weaning will result in a negative return of $160 per head. In a 150-cow operation, this results in a $24,000 loss.

While it is relatively easy to determine the cost of production for a weaned calf, forecasting fall feeder prices is somewhat more difficult. In times before the BSE beef trade ban, it was simply done by dividing Chicago futures by the Canadian dollar and subtracting an $8 basis. With the current ban in trade of both live cattle and boxed beef, the rules have changed and fall feeder cattle prices may be dealt with a $25 basis or greater (see Chart 2).

"Using a $20 basis and the feeder cattle futures for September with a $0.75 CDN dollar, feeder calves may bring less than $1.00/lb," says Weder. "With such prices and last year's costs of production, many cow/calf producers will be faced with heavy losses unless some planning is taken to offset this loss by retained ownership."

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Chart 2. Feeder and Live cattle prices using Future, CDN Dollar and basis.

Feeder Cattle Price Discovery				**Basis**			
	Futures	**CDN:USD**	**CDN value**	**$25**	**$20**	**$10**	**$5**
August '03	$86.25	$0.75	$115.00	$90.00	$95.00	$105.00	$110.00
September '03	$86.60	$0.75	$115.47	$90.47	$95.47	$105.47	$110.47
October '03	$86.70	$0.75	$115.60	$90.60	$95.60	$105.60	$110.60
November '03	$86.83	$0.75	$115.77	$90.77	$95.77	$105.77	$110.77
January '04	$84.60	$0.75	$112.93	$87.93	$92.93	$102.93	$107.93
March '04	$83.30	$0.75	$111.07	$86.07	$91.07	$101.07	$106.07
April '04	$83.50	$0.75	$111.33	$86.33	$91.33	$101.33	$106.33

Live / Fat Cattle Price Discovery				**Basis**			
	Futures	**CDN:USD**	**CDN value**	**$25**	**$20**	**$10**	**$5**
December '03	$73.48	$0.75	$97.97	$2.97	$77.94	$87.97	$92.97
February '04	$75.05	$0.75	$100.07	$75.07	$80.07	$90.07	$95.07
April '04	$75.25	$0.75	$100.33	$75.33	$80.33	$90.33	$95.33
June '04	$69.88	$0.75	$93.17	$68.17	$73.17	$83.17	$88.17

Prices based upon futures and Cdn dollar effective June 27, 2003

"Poor calf price forecasts may not be the only reason to consider retained ownership this winter," says Weder. "The excellent growing conditions for both forage and grain will increase feed supplies. Unlike last year's feed shortage and high prices, this years feed prices may be cut in half, making retained ownership a way to increase the value of them."

The following examples look at backgrounding and finishing calves. They show the added costs per head and per pound. The breakevens can then be used in conjunction with Chart 2 to determine the potential return of these management strategies. Producers are encouraged to determine their own costs and breakevens.

Example 1

Background Calves for 100 days @ 2 lbs/day

		$/hd	**$/lb gain**
Calf value	550 lbs x $1.10/lb	$605	
Grain	5lbs/day x 100 days x 4.2 cents/lb	$21	
Hay	15 lbs/day x 100 days x 3.25 cents/lb	$49	
Supplement	0.5 lbs/day x 100 days x 11 cents/lb	$5.50	
Bedding		$15	
Total Feed Cost		**$90.50**	**$0.45**
Vet, medicine, induction		$15	$0.08
Yardage	$0.35/hd/day x 100 days	$35	$0.18
Death loss	2% x $550	$12	$0.06
Interest	4% x $550 x period	$7	$0.03
Total Cost of Backgrounding		**$157.50**	**$0.80**
Breakeven sale price (based on 4% shrink)		$764.50/hd	$1.06/lb

Pros:

- delays marketing by 100 days
- relatively easy to do with existing facilities

Cons:

- cash flow issues
- not be suited for heavier cattle or very growth exotic cross calves
- risks associated with health
- higher costs of gain than finishing

Cont'd on page 4

Example 2

Finishing Calves for 250 days at 3.0 lbs/day

		$/hd	**$/lb gain**
Calf value	550 lbs x $1.10/lb	$605	
Grain	22 lbs/day x 250 days x 4.2 cents/lb	$230	
Silage	10 lbs/day x 250 days x 1.25 cents/lb	$31.25	
Supplement	1 lb/day x 250 days x 11 cents/lb	$27.50	
Bedding		$30	
Total Feed Cost		**$318.75**	**$0.425**
Vet, medicine, induction		$30	$0.04
Yardage	$0.35/hd/day x 250 days	$87.50	$0.12
Death loss	2% x $550	$12.10	$0.02
Interest	4% x 550 x period	$14.59	$0.02
Total Cost of Finishing		**$470.25**	**$0.61**
Breakeven sale price (based on 4% shrink)		$1067.85	$0.87/lb

Pros:

- delaying marketing by 250 days
- lower costs of gain
- opportunity to evaluate and capture for past genetic investments in sires

Cons:

- longer cash flow issues than with back grounding calves
- different marketing issues than with backgrounding
- lack of knowledge in finishing cattle
- risks associated with health
- greater cash investment into feeding

"Producers with yearlings to market off of grass should go through the same cost and breakeven analysis," says Weder.

Example 3

Finish Yearlings for 150 days at 3.30 lbs/day

		$/hd	**$/lb gain**
Feeder value	850 lbs x $1.00/lb	$850	
Grain	22 lbs/day x 150 days x 4.2 cents/lb	$138.60	
Silage	10 lbs/day x 150 days x 1.25 cents/lb	$18.75	
Supplement	1 lb/day x 150 days x 11 cents/lb	$16.50	
Bedding		$15	
Total Feed Cost		**$188.85**	**$0.38**
Vet, medicine, induction		$10	$0.01
Yardage	$0.35/hd/day x 150 days	$52.50	$0.11
Death loss	1% x $850	$8.5	$0.02
Interest	4% x $850 x period	$14	$0.03
Total Cost of Finishing Yearlings		**$273.85**	**$0.55**
Breakeven sale price (based on 4% shrink)		$1123.85	$0.87/lb

Pros:

- delaying marketing by 150 days
- greater animal performance due to compensatory gain and low animal morbidity

Cons:

- cash flow issues
- lack of knowledge in finishing cattle
- risks associated with health

Note other variances that can influence the cost of gain will include trucking, sales commissions and shrink

Cont'd on page 5

"Finally, one last option for cow calf producers who do not want to retain ownership and or background their calf, is to buy back into a share pen at a feedlot the day that the calves are sold," adds Trevor Yurchak, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture. "The calves may sell at a loss, but buying back into a similar group of cattle provides an opportunity to recapture that loss without having to feed your own calves."

Any type of retained ownership requires pre-planning and management. Producers must look at all information and facts. Planning should start now in July and not the week before cattle are marketed.

In the planning process:

- secure cash flow early
  - work with lenders and feeders associations
  - show them your breakevens, home work and thought process behind your decision
- secure forage and grain supplies
- evaluate your own feeding and management skills
- contact custom feedlots for custom feeding opportunities
- talk to the marketing experts
- understand and monitor market information
- have several plans and modify as markets change
- and, most importantly **know your cost of production**!

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Trevor Yurchak
(780) 675-8219

New term care agreement for livestock

The Alberta Farm Animal Care Association (AFAC) has developed a contract template designed to assist livestock producers who relocate their animals to areas with better feed and grazing. Relocation or liquidation of livestock inventories that have taken decades to develop are just two of the tough decisions that Alberta producers have faced as a result of consecutive years of drought. This contract template addresses the proper care of relocated animals.

"This past spring the AFAC ALERT Line and the Ag-info Centre received calls from a number of livestock producers whose animals were returned from lease-care agreements in far worse physical condition than when they left," says Susan Church, AFAC manager. "Inadequate arrangements, often no more than a handshake deal, have left owners in difficult situations. They are often unable to recoup the losses of animals returned in poor condition.

"There are several contract templates already available for cattle lease-out arrangements, but none spell out the responsibilities of each party under the provincial *Animal Protection Act* and applicable federal laws."

AFAC's contract template clearly defines who is responsible for the care, and ultimately the physical condition, of the livestock. "Producers who send livestock out of province need to understand that the law of the area in which they are feeding or grazing supersedes that of their province of origin," says Church. This contract template references passages from federal law and the laws relevant to B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The *Alberta Animal Protection Act* states that a *person ordinarily in charge of* an animal shall not cause or permit it to be in distress. This means the responsibility falls upon the shoulders of the person who has agreed to feed or graze the livestock. "Our contract template allows for verification of the physical condition of the animals when they leave the farm of origin, assessment during the term care period and evaluation when they leave the term caretaker's facility," Church adds. "It also identifies the responsibility of each caretaking component, from the veterinarian protocol right down to salt blocks, and assigns each one to an individual named in the contract. There is no second guessing."

The contract template is available by phoning the Alberta Agriculture's Ag-Info Centre toll free at 1-866-882-7677 or AFAC at (403) 932-8050. The contract template is also available on-line and producers can download it from AFAC's web site at www.afac.ab.ca.

AFAC is supported by Alberta's livestock industry to promote responsible animal care. To report concerns about livestock care call the Animal Care ALERT Line 1-800-506-CARE (2273).

Contact: *Susan Church*
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(403) 932-8050

Bloat in cattle

Bloat, frothy bloat and pasture bloat is an ongoing problem for cattle producers. There have also been increased incidences of pasture bloat since legume forages were introduced into cultivated pastures. Bloat occurs when large volumes of gas are produced in the rumen and, due to frothy rumen contents, the cow is not able to expel enough of the gas in the normal fashion.

A new publication, ***Bloat in Cattle*** has been produced by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. This publication provides information on the causes, control and treatment of bloat in cattle for livestock producers, veterinarians and agrologists.

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Bloat is a complex disease that is difficult to predict under field conditions. While preparing information for this publication, cattle were observed in experimental conditions and fed fresh alfalfa and bloat-causing feedlot diets. Bloat was also observed under grazing conditions on alfalfa pastures.

Bloat in Cattle presents well-established facts and consistent field observations based on collective experience.

The publication explains normal production and expiry of gas, mechanisms of bloat, frothy bloat, free-gas bloat, pasture bloat and feedlot bloat. It also contains information on stored and processed legume feeds, and discusses treatment of bloat and anti-foaming agents that are available.

For a free copy of ***Bloat in Cattle***, contact Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or call toll free in Canada 1-800-292-5697, (780) 427-0391 in the Edmonton area.

Contact: Publications Office
(780) 427-0391

Building a market one handshake at a time

Strong relationships with customers and processor partners are the cornerstones of any successful agri-preneur operation. Ron and Sheila Hamilton have learned a lot about developing relationships. They've had to as they've built Sunworks Farm, a first generation certified organic farm direct marketing operation near Armena.

Much of Sunworks' organic free-range poultry, beef and pork products are sold directly to consumers. The Old Strathcona Farmers' Market in Edmonton, the ABC Farmers' Market (formerly the Blackfoot Market) in Calgary, local farmers' markets and sales right from the farm gate account for the bulk of their sales.

Personal contact gives the Hamilton's immediate feedback on their products. "We enjoy discussing our products and how we raise our animals with our customers," says Sheila Hamilton. "Our customers know us and we know them and their families. Our market is built on trust. It's that personal connection that has grown our business in just eight short years."

The Hamiltons take pride in offering high quality meats and eggs to their customers at affordable prices, but they couldn't do it without other processors they work with. "A good working relationship with processors is critical," states Ron Hamilton. "You have to take the time to listen to them and accommodate their needs. Plan ahead and communicate regularly. Let them know any changes in needs well in advance. That way, they will more likely be able to fill special orders or meet short timeline requests."

Sheila and Tina Pedersen, the meat processor for Sunworks Farm, co-presented the session on *Ties that Bind, Working with your Meat Processor* at the ***Explore Direct*** conference last winter. Tina Pedersen and her family own and operate Double Z Farms, a provincially inspected abattoir in Strome.

The Hamiltons are more than willing to share their wealth of production and marketing information. They are hosting a Free Range – Organic - Farm Direct Field Day at their farm on August 11, 2003.

"It's not just another tour," says Hamilton. "It's a chance for other farmers interested in organic production or marketing direct to consumers to get down and dirty and see how we do it."

The morning features hands-on production experience and the afternoon program focuses on farm direct marketing issues. As space is limited, those interested are advised to register early. For more information on the Farm Direct Field Day or Sunworks Farm products, contact Ron or Sheila Hamilton toll free at (877) 393-3133.

To learn more about farm direct marketing, contact Karen Goad with the Ag-Entrepreneurship Division of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Grande Prairie, at (780) 538-5629.

Contact: Karen Goad
(780) 538-5629
(e-mail: karen.goad@gov.ab.ca
www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify

Provincial 4-H Dairy Show 2003

Nearly 80 4-H members from across the province will take part in the 57th Annual Provincial 4-H Dairy Show on July 16 and 17, 2003 at the Western Exhibition Grounds in Red Deer. This event is filled with learning opportunities, new friendships and a chance for delegates to touch up on their dairy industry knowledge.

The show begins with the Dairy Husbandry Quiz, where members answer questions on all aspects of the dairy industry. Delegates then compete in the Knowledge Skills Competition where junior members take part in the Dairy Bowl, intermediate members in Dairy Jeopardy and senior members work to solve a problem concerning the dairy industry. Grooming, judging and showmanship classes are also part of the event. These classes are followed by a series of conformation classes where members display their animals to compete for the title of Supreme Grand Champion.

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With the help of sponsors, Agrifoods International Cooperative – Dairyworld, Alberta Holstein Association, Alberta Milk Producers, American Breeders Service Global (Canada), GAS Alberta Inc., Livestock Identification Services Ltd., Westerner Exposition Association and various other dairy sponsors, these experiences prepare 4-H dairy club members to be leaders in the dairy field by providing them with the opportunity to continuously build on their skills at each show. For more information about 4-H, visit the web site at www.4h.ab.ca or contact the Provincial 4-H Office at (780) 422-4H4H.

Contact: *Hannah Davis*
(780) 427-4462

Agri-News Briefs

Market garden farm guide available

The ***2003 Come to Our Farms Guide***, published by the Alberta Market Gardeners Association (AMGA) is available free of charge. Over 95 Alberta berry and vegetable farms are listed and the guide includes information on what each farm produces, how and where they market and the location of the farm. The product lineup for 2003 includes strawberries, raspberries, saskatoons, black currants, potatoes and fresh vegetables of all kinds, cut flowers and bedding plants. Some farms have additional features, such as fishing ponds, tours, picnic areas and entertainment facilities. To obtain a free copy of the ***2003 Come to Our Farms Guide***, call the AMGA toll free at 1-800-661-2642 and leave your mailing address. There is also an e-guide available on the internet and is accessible by visiting AMGA's web site at www.amga.ab.ca.

Swine technology workshop

The Red Deer Swine Technology Workshop is being held on October 28 and 29, 2003 at the Harvest Centre, on the Westerner grounds. This workshop focuses on production issues that are relevant to owner/operators, stock people and farm managers. The event features a tradeshow and provides a venue for the Western Canadian swine industry to come together and share ideas. The program includes presentations by Dr. Todd Stumpf, Cotswold Swine Genetics in Minnesota, speaking on gilt management; Kevin Grier, George Morris Center, discussing markets; Dr. Terry Whiting, a veterinarian with Manitoba Agriculture, discussing animal transportation and other producers discussing their experiences with finishing pigs in large groups. This workshop is a joint venture with the pork industry, Alberta Pork and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The workshop is sponsored by many of the businesses serving the pork industry. For more information, contact Michelle Follensbee at (780) 415-0828, Edmonton, e-mail: michelle.follensbee@gov.ab.ca. or
Shirley Sommert-Ogden at (780) 427-5320, Edmonton, e-mail: shirley.sommert-ogden@gov.ab.ca.

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July 21, 2003

If manure had gold...Over 320 conference participants learn the possibilities

If manure had gold, all of the issues surrounding manure management would disappear. That's how keynote speaker Dr. Lawrence Cahoon of the University of North Carolina ended his session at the recent ***Manure Management Conference – Progress and Opportunities*** in Lethbridge.

Although currently manure doesn't have gold, there are real opportunities to create value and capture that value on-farm. Cahoon presented an overview of the North Carolina experience and provided some lessons learned and strategies for how other jurisdictions can take advantage of the experience. "The central issue we face in North Carolina is what I refer to as 'ecological uncoupling,'" explains Cahoon. "A small land base is used to produce a huge volume of animals, creating the need to import feed and other resources and export wastes.

"This uncoupling devalues animal wastes and byproducts, so the real challenge is to find ways to create value in these materials. We must think 'outside the box' and find new approaches, such as the current efforts in biogas production and perhaps biotechnological use of swine as bioreactors to generate valuable products in their waste stream in the future." A proper ecological and economic perspective is necessary to guide creativity and ingenuity.

"The conference brought together over 320 industry representatives, including producers, industry, government, research and academia," says John Kolk, conference chair, Alberta's Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESA), Council member and Lethbridge area producer. "The producer is often the interface between these various groups, so having producers attend and speak at the conference improves that interface and builds some strength for all of the players."

"The tours were one of the highlights of the conference, providing the opportunity for interaction and discussion. Two separate tours were organized giving participants the chance to learn firsthand what was happening in the field, and to link the workshop presentations to real production and research issues," explains Troy Ormann, soil conservation technologist for the County of Lethbridge. The research tour included

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manure incorporation, long-term manure forage research plots, a research feedlot and a composting site. The farm tour stopped at a feedlot, a buffering strip demonstration, a riparian site along the Oldman River and a commercial composting operation.

"Overall we were very pleased with the conference," says Kolk. "The opportunities side really opened some eyes. Assuming we can look forward to some stability in the industry, and support from industry investors, we can hopefully move ahead on some of these opportunities." Lots of information was shared on nutrient management planning, regulations and strategies. One of the things Kolk noticed was the higher level of awareness of risk that producers left with. "Although producers are doing things in a very proactive way because it's the right thing to do, we also have to protect our financial and liability interests."

This was the fifth annual tri-provincial manure conference organized by Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Saskatchewan Agriculture Food, & Rural Revitalization and Manitoba Agriculture and Food. "The organizing committee did an excellent job as a team in developing a well researched and well-rounded conference," adds Kolk. "Lots of credit to the organizing committee for getting it right! The conference moves to Manitoba next year."

The winners of two professionally developed Nutrient Management Plans, donated by EBA Engineering Consultants Ltd. and Agri-Trend, were Rod Phillips of Athabasca and Lawrence Miller of Barrhead. Copies of the proceedings can be downloaded from Alberta Agriculture's web site at: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/manureconference, or by calling Alberta Agriculture at (780) 422-4385.

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2003 Canada-Alberta Farm Water Program

A new program, the Canada-Alberta Farm Water Program (CAFWP) is jointly funded by the federal and provincial governments. Federal dollars are contributed through the recently signed Agriculture Policy Framework (APF) Implementation Agreement. Funding from the provincial government was provided through the 2003/04 provincial budget.

"This new program essentially takes the place of the previous Alberta Farm Water Program," says Marcia Hewitt-Fisher, program policy specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The final deadline for constructing projects under the old Alberta Farm Water Program was March 31, 2003, and applications had to be submitted by May 31, 2003. Any projects constructed after April 1, 2003, will be eligible for benefit under CAFWP."

Deadlines for the new farm water program have been set. Producers have until March 31, 2004 to complete their projects and until April 15, 2004 to submit their application.

"The basic program rules and policy for the CAFWP are the same as with the previous program," adds Hewitt-Fisher. "We will, however, be encouraging producers constructing projects under the new program to contact Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Rural Services Division at (780) 422-9167 for application and resource information before construction on the project begins."

Experience under the original program suggests that producers who accessed technical expertise before construction realized a cost savings above and beyond the program funding. Contacting Alberta Agriculture before starting construction allows producers to access technical expertise on project design.

Applications for the Canada-Alberta Farm Water Program can be obtained through the Rural Services Division of Alberta Agriculture by calling (780) 422-9167 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first). Applications are also available at MLA constituency offices or can be downloaded from the internet: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/farmwater/index.html.

For additional information on the program or help with application details, producers can contact Alberta Agriculture's Ag-Info Centre toll free at 1-866-882-7677, Alberta Agriculture's Rural Services Division (780) 422-9167, or their regional Alberta Agriculture Water Specialist.

Contact: Marcia Hewitt-Fisher
(780) 427-3315

John Knapp
Director, Rural Services Division
Alberta Agriculture
(780) 422-9167

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

2003 – berry promising!

The Fruit Growers Society of Alberta (FGSA) are forecasting a healthy crop year for 2003 and anticipating an excellent harvest. Alberta's fruit industry has increased considerably in the past few years, with many farm families diversifying and creating orchards on part of their farm.

"An extensive amount of fruit is grown in Alberta," says Bob Stielow, president of FGSA. "Orchards of saskatoons, rhubarb, red and black currants, sour cherries, wild black cherries or chokecherries as they are sometimes called, raspberries, strawberries and apples can be found throughout Alberta. The largest fruit crop in Alberta is the saskatoon berry, and we

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anticipate that this year's harvest will yield approximately three million pounds. Many farms grow two or more fruits and make excellent family outing destinations."

Alberta orchards are listed on the FGSA's web site at www.albertafruit.com. The web site, with orchards listed according to geographic location, provides information such as driving directions, types of fruit at each orchard, picking times, recipes and canning or freezing instructions.

"Another feature of the FGSA web site is BRENS – the Berry Ready Electronic Notification System," says Joyce Megson, FGSA executive director. "This feature provides an e-mail service for registered customers notifying them when the berries in their area are ready. It takes the guess work out of the U-Pick harvest time."

Fruit crops will be ready for picking starting mid-July. The FGSA encourages Albertans to eat fresh or fresh-frozen locally grown products. And, don't forget to take the family out for an orchard visit, pick some fruit and enjoy the countryside. For further information about FGSA events, contact the Association at (780) 980-0660 or visit the web site, www.albertafruit.com.

Contact: *Joyce Megson*
(780) 980-0660

Alberta's Outstanding Young Farmer

Steve Snider, who, along with members of his family, operates Little Red Hen Mills in Edberg, Alberta, was named Alberta's Outstanding Young Farmer (OYF) at the annual awards banquet held this year in Lethbridge on July 5, 2003.

The Sniders have been practicing organic cropping methods for over 17 years, and Steve is a big part of the operation's success. An active speaker, Snider takes part in teaching opportunities and holds regular tours of the Little Red Hen Mills operation, demonstrating the benefits of organic growing and explaining the crop rotation methods he uses.

nider is currently the president of the Edberg and District Ag iety and has for years actively promoted crop rotation and ganic cropping methods in Alberta and in other provinces.

The OYF award is a very prestigious honour designed to recognize farmers who exemplify excellence in their profession. Farm operators aged 18 to 39 who derive a minimum of two-thirds of their income from their farming are eligible to be nominated for the OYF award. The award is presented to is based on five specific criteria:

- progress made during their farming career
- soil, water and energy conservation practices
- crop and livestock production history
- financial and management practices
- commitment and contributions to community, province and nation

Each year provincial OYF award winners compete for the Canadian title, Canada's Outstanding Young Farmer. This year, the national award will be presented at an event being held in Vancouver during the first week of December. Snider will, no doubt, represent Alberta well in the national competition.

Canada's OYF program is sponsored by CIBC, Bayer Crop Science and John Deere.

For further information on the OYF program and award, visit the OYF web site at http://www.oyfcanada.com

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"Spies" discover secrets for the future

The People Developing People (PDP) program is fast approaching. Over 200 4-H participants, ages 13 to 16, will travel to the Alberta 4-H Centre at Battle Lake to attend one of three PDP programs offered this summer.

This year's theme for PDP is ***I Spy***. PDP has a long history of setting the stage for the delegates future participation in 4-H programs as they uncover new evidence about themselves and the world around them. "This year, networking with other 'spies' exposes delegates to awareness sessions, past successes and creative ideas for the future," explains Lanny Anderson, 4-H summer staff. "It encourages individuals to become more aware of the numerous gadgets and gizmos needed for life's tough missions. Never knowing what lies around the corner, delegates will be able to sneak a peek (like a spy) and prepare themselves for an experience of a lifetime."

Participants of PDP participate in unique challenges throughout the week that allow them to discuss issues that teens face. Topics include peer pressure, budgeting and planning ahead. A main part of the program is the social forum that is based on a school council planning an activity that would involve all student groups. Delegates use teamwork skills and information learned throughout the week to plan a successful activity.

Delegates also take part in an environmental forum where they identify issues pertaining to rural sustainability. In teams, delegates create a proposal to present to their peers and a panel of judges. Each team develops an argument for or against an issue that is presented to them and provides reasons for their decision.

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Over and above the forums and discussion sessions, members participate in traditional camp events such as water front activities, campfire, games galore and the extreme adventure.

Sponsored by Agricore, ATCO Gas/ ATCO Electric, Meyers Norris Penny, Peavey Mart, Syngenta (formerly Novartis), United Farmers of Alberta Cooperative Ltd and Weyerhaeuser Canada Ltd, PDP strives to enhance intermediate 4-H members' communication skills and encourages them to work together towards a common goal.

For more information on 4-H, visit www.4h.ab.ca or contact the Provincial 4-H Office at (780) 422-4H4H

Contact:
Lanny Anderson
(403) 948-8509
Roberta Lindeman
(403) 948-8509
Hannah Davis
(780) 427-4462

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Echinacea field day

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Center North in Edmonton, is holding an Echinacea field day on August 13, 2003 from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. This will be an opportunity to meet with other growers and develop a network. The field day will give participants a chance to view plant density and winter survival trial in the field and see a greenhouse trial that is a part of a commercial pilot scale study. During the afternoon, information on increasing Echinacoside in plants by increasing the feeder roots will be shared, as well as information on seedling problems some growers had this year. Registration begins at noon, with a lunch provided from 1:00 to 2:00, followed by the walking tour of plots and greenhouses. Registration cost is $20 per person, payable on the day. For further information, contact Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza at (780) 415-2303, e-mail mohyuddin.mirza@gov.ab.ca, or Dr. Kewsi Ampong-Nyarko (780) 415-2136, e-mail kwesi.ampong-nyarko@gov.ab.ca.

Bow Island sub station field day

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is hosting a field day at the Bow Island sub station on July 29, 2003. The organizing committee have planned a full morning of discussion and presentation on beans, corn ,chick peas, lentil, soy beans, faba beans, field peas as well as sharing information about grass and forages and alfalfa and timothy projects. Demonstrations of irrigation sprinklers and moisture monitoring devices round out the morning. In the afternoon, after the provided lunch, participants can choose one of two field tours to attend. One tour focuses on dryland agronomy trials, winter wheat, winter triticale, malting barley, chickpeas and canola. The other tour will focus on bean variety trials. For further information or registration, contact one of the organizing committee members:
Ross McKenzie (403) 381-5842, Lethbridge;
Henry Najda (403) 362-1346, Brooks;
Stewart Jangula (403) 362-1337, Brooks;
Lori Delanoy (403) 223-7915, Taber;
David Coutts or Leigh Morrison (403) 545-2231, Bow Island.

Horses and West Nile virus

- West Nile virus (WNV) can pose a serious health threat to horses, mules and donkeys
- Mosquitoes spread WNV after becoming infected feeding on infected wild birds
- Horses, mules and donkeys are incidental hosts and WNV cannot be transmitted from one horse to another
- A licensed vaccine for horses is available from veterinarians
- WNV in horses is now a reportable disease in Alberta and suspicious or confirmed cases must be reported to the Chief Provincial Veterinarian
- Most mammals, including dogs and cats, are resistant to disease from WNV and are very rarely affected

For more information about WNV and how to best protect horses, mules and donkeys, talk to your local veterinarian, check for information on the internet by visiting the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association www.avma.ab.ca or Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development www.agric.gov.ab.ca. Additional information is also available by calling the Alberta Ag-Info Centre toll free at 1-866-882-7677.

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Agri-News

July 28, 2003

New legislation encourages cooperation on public lands

New legislation for recreational access to public lands that are leased for grazing or cultivation has taken a balanced approach and considers the needs of various users. Agricultural leaseholders and recreational users are all encouraged to use respect and to follow the new legislation.

The *Agricultural Dispositions Statutes Amendment Act 2003* (Bill 16) was proclaimed on July 10, 2003. This new Act rescinds Bill 31 and introduces new regulations for recreational and exploration access on agricultural public lands. The new regulations promote cooperation and respect between disposition holders and other users of the land, through clearer rules and better communications.

"The legislation has clear regulations that benefit both the leaseholder and other public land users," says Keith Lyseng, executive director, Rangeland Management Branch with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD), Edmonton. "Leaseholders are mainly concerned with knowing who is accessing the land. Under the new legislation, leaseholders can stay informed about who wants to access the land and about the purpose of the visit. The leaseholder must provide reasonable access for recreational users on foot, but can say no to motorized access - the province recognizes that there is a big difference between motorized and foot access. Another benefit of the legislation is that it reduces the leaseholder's liability if a recreational user is injured while on the lease."

Under the legislation, leaseholders are asked to:

- provide contact information to Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. Beginning September 1, 2003, contact information will be available to recreational users on a new departmental web site. The leaseholder can indicate that no contact is necessary, along with other conditions.
- allow access for defined recreational purposes unless certain circumstances exist:
  - livestock are present within a fenced pasture (if livestock are not impacted by the visit, leaseholders are expected to provide access);
  - a crop on the land has not yet been harvested;
  - a fire ban is in effect, as determined by a municipal or provincial authority;
  - a recreational user wishes to hunt in an area where livestock are nearby or camp on the land;
  - a proposed use that would be contrary to a recreational management plan for the lease is requested.

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Recreational users are asked to:

- contact the leaseholder before they enter the land for recreational purposes. In this way, the recreational user can gain more information about the land they want to access, including information about hazards on the land.
- follow the duties outlined in the regulations such as packing out all litter, refraining from lighting fires without consent, and closing gates.

A dispute resolution process is available to help resolve conflicts. "There are two levels of dispute resolution that recreational users or leaseholders can use," adds Lyseng. "An application can be made to local settlement officers and should the matter not be resolved, either party can request a review by SRD regional directors in the field. Fairness and safety are the most important factors and handling the matter locally is certainly the most effective and efficient way to proceed in a recreational matter."

Under this new legislation, if a leaseholder has concerns with a proposed exploration program, a new review process can be used to deal with these concerns. If they have to do with the operational details of the exploration program, a local settlement officer with the department reviews the circumstances. If the dispute is related to compensation for access and damages on a grazing lease or farm development lease, the company can go to the Surface Rights Board and apply for a right-of-entry order to explore. Where the parties cannot agree on compensation, the Surface Rights Board can issue a compensation order for access or for loss or damages.

"This review process to mitigate a disagreement between a leaseholder and an exploration company, is for exploration not development," says Lyseng. "There was no such provision in the former Act."

Alberta has about 100 million acres of public land in total, including about five million acres of agricultural land leased for grazing and cultivation and approximately 6,200 grazing leaseholders. Most of the grazing lands in the forested foothills are under forest grazing allotments, which are not affected by this legislation.

For more information about these regulations, Albertans are encouraged to check the following sources:

- toll-free hotline 1-866-279-0023
- two new fact sheets, available at the website http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/land/recaccess/index.html
- a new web site to be launched on September 1, 2003

Contact: *SRD hotline*
1-866-279-0023

Crossing the border with horses

Crossing the Canada/U.S. Border with Horses is a new pamphlet published by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to help horse owners understand what regulations govern the movement of horses across the shared border.

"Each country has regulations in place that horse owners should be aware of before they transport horses to the States for sale, breeding or competition or should they plan on bringing a horse into Canada from the U.S.," says Les Burwash, head of equine programs with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie. "It is also important to keep in mind that regulations can change at any time and without notice should disease outbreak or international events dictate."

All horses leaving the province must have a brand inspection and be accompanied by a Horse Permit or an 'A' form. All horses require a negative Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) test within 180 days of entry. Documentation of this test must be filled out by a veterinarian and endorsed by a Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) or USDA vet.

"As with all animal movement over the border, horses require a Veterinary Health Certificate stating that the horse has been examined within 90 days of entering the country and is free of contagious disease," adds Burwash. "All health check documents must be completed and signed by a veterinarian and endorsed by a CFIA or USDA veterinarian. Because of these requirements, preparing for transport certainly isn't something owners should wait until the last minute to consider. Owners should begin preparing early and make sure that all registration papers and vet check papers are in order well in advance of the intended transport."

The pamphlet includes a considerable amount of information on moving horses for less than 30 days and moving horses permanently. It also outlines exceptional circumstances that would require veterinary inspection when bringing horses into Canada.

A list of Ports of Entry and phone numbers for those Ports is also included in the pamphlet. Owners should be aware that only certain border crossings have veterinarians on duty on a regular basis and at others, arrangements have to be made with the border vet in advance so that they are available and on-site. Phone numbers for the Livestock ID Services Ltd, CFIA and the U.S. Department of Transport are also provided in the brochure.

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Crossing the Canada/U.S. Border with Horses (Agdex 460/843-1), is a good resource to have on hand. For a free copy, contact Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 or call toll free in Canada 1-800-292-5697 or (780) 427-0391 in the Edmonton area.

Contact: *Les Burwash* *Publications Office*
(403) 948-8538 *(780) 427-0391*

Latest technology at AgTech Centre field day

Producers, industry and the general public are invited to get an inside look at the latest agricultural technology research at a field day being hosted by the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's AgTech Centre. The field day is being held on July 31, 2003 in Lethbridge.

The field day is open to everyone, and will run from 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. at the AgTech Centre research farm, located one mile south of the County of Lethbridge Airport on Highway 5, and 1.5 miles east on Secondary Highway 508. There is no cost to attend and refreshments will be available.

"Our official mandate is to support agricultural sustainability," says Rick Atkins, manager of the AgTech Centre, "but our more direct goal is to conduct practical, useable agricultural technology research. The Centre's work results in better equipment or management practices that brings direct benefits to producers and to the industries that support those producers."

The field day will include equipment demonstrations and research plot tours. AgTech engineers and research technicians will conduct the equipment demonstrations, highlight a broad range of leading-edge research and answer producer questions. The demonstrations will showcase the latest in sprayer technology and direct seeding equipment.

The plot tour is the best way for producers to see Alberta Agriculture's work first-hand. Tour guides will begin the producer tours at 1:00 p.m. This year's tour includes a demonstration of nitrogen placement using a disk opener, double seeding using half-seed rates at right angles and residue managers with disk openers for use in direct-seeding systems.

The plot tour also includes a visit to the research plots currently being used to investigate the effect of different row spacings when direct seeding barley, canola and wheat. As well, producers will see research plots examining the effect of straw colour on crop growth. Other studies examine alternative weed control for chickpeas.

Lastly, the plot tour will demonstrate the effect of six different sprayer technologies in four different crops. Factors include speed of application, chemical rates and water rates.

The AgTech Centre is part of the Alberta Agriculture's Agricultural Engineering Branch. Its mandate is to support all aspects of agricultural sustainability. For more information about the field day, contact the AgTech Centre directly at (403) 329-1212 or accessed in Alberta through the Alberta Government toll-free line at 310-0000.

Contact: *Rick Atkins*
(403) 329-1212

What did you learn this year?

Lifelong learning helps people meet the personal and business challenges they face. Agri-preneurs are encouraged to seize learning opportunities, and attend educational tours and trade shows throughout the year. These events can help business people address problems, strengthen skills and plan for the future.

Nancy Kindler, director, Agri-preneurship Programs with NxLeveL Canada Inc., views attending trade shows as a cost effective form of market research. "Attending trade shows is an excellent way to update market research, see trends and obtain industry information. Most importantly, you get to connect with people in the industry at all levels of the value chain – suppliers, competitors and customers." Touring trade shows can also save you time as many of your contacts are all in one room.

Go to the trade show prepared. Take a list of open-ended questions to gather as much information as possible. To keep up-to-date with new ideas, information and contacts in the industry, visit with other people at conferences and 'pick their brains'. If possible, sit with different people each day and chat with them about their businesses. It's not always easy to start a conversation with strangers but well worth trying. Most people are very willing to share their ideas, successes and failures.

Blaine Staples, a member of Innisfail Growers and a director of the Alberta Market Gardeners Association (AMGA) attended the ***Explore Direct*** conference in Red Deer in January. As Blaine explains, "It was a terrific conference with many sessions that related to people who market products directly to the consumer. I always believe that if I can come away with even one idea that I can use, it will easily pay for the cost of the conference. I encourage others to collect all the information they can, whether by attending courses, going to conferences or networking with other direct marketers."

Blaine and Leona Staples gained many marketing and staff training ideas from John Stanley's session at ***Explore Direct***. For instance, they are developing permanent and professional signs to identify the product on their farmers' market tables. Each sign will include the product name, the Innisfail Growers logo, and three product benefits. In addition, each sign has an erasable space to add the product price.

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There are a number of interesting tours and field days throughout the summer. The ***Explore Direct*** team is holding two study tours to Alberta Approved farmers' markets. The first study group will tour the farmers' market at St. Albert on August 23, 2003, and the other study tour will visit the Millarville farmers' market on September 20, 2003. These study tours are open to new and existing farm direct marketers as well as farmers' market vendors and managers. Plan to attend some of these events, meet new people and keep your 'eyes and ears open' for ideas to use in your business.

The Alberta Agri-Preneur provides timely, incisive and creative ideas for agriculture entrepreneurs and is available free of charge. To have your name added to the mailing list, contact the Westlock Office of Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development at (780) 349-4466 or e-mail Darleen Lynes at darleen.lynes@gov.ab.ca.

Contact: *Marian Williams*
(780) 679-1360

Leadership Through Counseling Seminar

Future Counselors uncovered the Mystery!

From June 30 to July 4, 2003, nearly 80 senior 4-H members (ages 15 to 20) traveled to the Alberta 4-H Centre at Battle Lake to take part in the annual Leadership Through Counseling Seminar (LTCS). During the program, 4-H summer staff delivered an unforgettable experience to help delegates become outstanding counselors and leaders throughout the summer and in the years to come.

Through this year's theme, ***Putting the Pieces Together***, staff promoted communication, teambuilding, leadership, problem solving and personal development. In addition, delegates took part in non-stop activities including small group sessions, archery, canoeing, campfires, first aid, water safety and crafts. Delegates were also given a chance to improve their organizational skills, as small groups took turns planning events such as the candle lighting ceremony, talent show and dance.

Justin Janke, from the Alder Flats Multi Club was thrilled to be chosen as one of the junior staff for People Developing People #2 this summer. "LTCS provided very practical experience. It put me in real life situations that I will face as a counselor and developed my leadership skills," comments Justin. "I am excited and ready to share my skills and talents with youth I will meet over the summer."

Lindsey Kowalchuk, Morrin 4-H Multi Club, comments, "LTCS taught me to trust and understand my peers. This summer delegates of LTCS will work together as counselors at various camps so that our campers have the amazing time we did!"

On Canada Day, delegates had another chance to demonstrate their skills and creativity as they dressed as famous Canadians and answered Canadian trivia. They were also the first group to try out the latest addition to the 4-H Centre – a giant 'Slip and Slide' recently purchased by the 4-H Foundation.

Sponsored by Agrium, ATCO Electrical/ATCO Gas, Meyers Norris Penny, Peavey Mart and the Wetaskiwin Cooperative Association Ltd, LTCS delivered an unforgettable experience by combining educational, social and recreational events. Delegates of the program will have numerous opportunities to build on and implement their newly learned skills while counseling regional and provincial camps near Bonnyville, Westlock, Peace River, Medicine Hat and Wetaskiwin.

For more information on 4-H, visit the 4-H web site at www.4h.ab.ca or contact the Provincial 4-H Office at (780) 422-4H4H

Contact: *Mark Shand*
(403) 948-8508

Agri-News Briefs

FGSA field day

The Fruit Growers Society of Alberta (FGSA) is hosting a field day on August 14, 2003 at DNA Gardens, Elnora Alberta. This event is one of three primary educational events being held by the FGSA this year, specifically intended to help educate fruit growers. The event is organized to keep growers up-to-date on production methods, weed control, marketing techniques and advances in nutraceutical research. It is also provides a great opportunity for growers to keep in touch with one another. For further information on the field day, contact Joyce Megson, executive director, FGSA at (403) 748-2289 or visit the FGSA web site at www.albertafruit.com.

Manure management – call for abstracts

The second ***Integrated Solutions to Manure Management*** conference and exhibition is being held in London, Ontario on March 8 and 9, 2004. The conference provides a valuable forum for producers, regulators, policy makers, service and technology providers and rural communities. It is a chance to further develop partnerships to address challenges and opportunities in manure management and to exhibit new and innovative technologies, processes and services. The Technical Program Committee will be taking submissions of abstracts until August 15, 2003. Presentations should be in keeping with and address the applied solutions focus of the conference. Abstracts should be limited to 300 words and can be submitted electronically to info.istmm@firststageinc.com. For further information, contact Barole Burnham, program chair at cburnham@attcanada.ca or visit the conference web site at www.istmm.com.

Seminar for Alberta lamb producers

Demand for fresh local lamb is growing every year and producers are spending more time and money to produce the right lamb for the right market. As part of an on-going extension program for Alberta sheep producers, the Sheep Extension Network (SEN) and Sunterra Meats are hosting a training session for lamb producers. The workshop is being held on August 14, 2003 at Sunterra Meats, Innisfail. Sunterra lamb buyer, Randy Smith, is one of the most experienced lamb buyers in Canada. Producers can learn from Smith how to assess live animals in the barn and then compare different quality carcasses on the hook. They will also learn more about what is required in the processing of safe, high quality meat products. Sunterra is the only federally inspected lamb processing facility in Western Canada. It is part of the Price farm family business that markets beef, veal, pork and lamb products from farm to consumer. Co-host SEN is a partnership between the Alberta Sheep & Wool Commission, provincial producer groups and the Business Development Unit of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Space is limited and producers must register to attend. For more information and to register, call Margaret Cook at the Alberta Sheep & Wool Commission in Airdrie, (403) 948-8533 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first).

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Agri-News

August 4, 2003

Alberta provides further support for cattle industry

The Alberta government announced 79 million in short and medium-term support for provincial producers as the 10th week of border closures to Canadian cattle and beef continued.

"While we are fully supportive of continuing the national Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) recovery program, we cannot stand idle with a cattle industry in dire straights," said Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "These supports are one more step in ensuring our industry's survival over the next few months." She added that Alberta Agriculture officials continue to work with industry to ensure this program is working for them. "We are also working with industry on a number of related concerns, including dealing with culled cows and bulls," she said.

The interim measures stem from the Minister's meeting with approximately 60 industry and government representatives on Friday, July 18 in Calgary. The measures include:

- a $65-million Fed Cattle Competitive Bid Program
- $10 million in changes to the Alberta Disaster Assistance Loan Program and the Alberta Farm Development Loan Program, and
- a $4-million Stranded Beef Export Container initiative.

Alberta's new Fed Cattle Competitive Bid Program will allow buyers to purchase fed cattle for retention purposes, reducing the current pressure on Alberta's beef markets. The initial sellers would be eligible for payments on the same basis as cattle sold for slaughter under the federal-provincial compensation plan. The buyers would be required to hold cattle for a minimum of eight weeks.

Mark Norris, Minister of Economic Development, who attended the announcement as a show of support for Alberta's cattle industry, said, "The Stranded Export Beef Container Initiative will pay for the storage and demurrage costs of Canadian beef that has been rejected in transit or held in bonded warehouses in foreign markets." He added that this would help maintain long-term trade relationships with foreign buyers, allowing for easier re-entry into those markets when borders re-open

Minister McClellan, although advocating for a national loan guarantee program, indicated Alberta would also be prepared to make changes to its two loan programs administered by AFSC, if necessary. McClellan would ask AFSC to adjust the terms and conditions, as well as increase loan limits to $1 million.

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Darcy Davis, Vice-Chair of Alberta Beef Producers said that these programs will help Alberta's cattle industry survive the coming months. He added, "We're working on the issues at hand-if it drags on, we'll work with government on the new challenges we might face."

Jeff Ball, Vice-President of Alberta Cattle Feeders Association said that the Fed Cattle Competitive Bid program would serve the immediate needs of the cattle feeders. "This program allows our industry to have some immediate cash flow while helping to free up space to move cattle later on," he said.

More information about these programs can be found on Ropin' the Web at www.agric.gov.ab.ca.

McClellan said these plans will work in conjunction with the federal-provincial compensation program, announced June 18, to which the province has already committed more than $100 million. Both programs are being supported through the province's Sustainability Fund. She added that the Alberta government would still work collaboratively with its provincial, territorial and federal partners to resolve any BSE-related issues.

Contact: *John Knapp*
Director, Rural Services Division
Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 415-9755

Terry Willock
Communications Director
Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-7683

Mark Erdman
Communications Director
Alberta Economic Development
(780) 427-0528

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton for the above contacts.

Darcy Davis
Vice-Chair
Alberta Beef Producers
(403) 546-2647

Jeff Ball
Vice-President
Alberta Cattle Feeders Association
(403) 684-3540

Meat marketing basics for direct marketers

When it comes to marketing product from your farm, it's important to first choose the best marketing channel to suit your needs. Whether your product is available to consumers at Farmers' Market, by farm retail, at the farm gate or through municipal buying club, it's important that it is easy for you and easy for your customers.

"In Alberta we have nearly 100 approved Farmers' Markets. Many successful markets stationed in and around the urban areas," says Kerry Engel, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Farm Direct Marketing Initiative, Westlock. "Advantages to selling through an Alberta Approved Farmers' Market include immediate cash payment, product feedback and client interaction. As any direct marketer will tell you, feedback from their customers is what makes them 'market focused' and supplies them with valuable product and service ideas."

If the decision is to become a vendor at a **Farmers' Market**, be prepared for increased labor requirements. Many markets have a waiting list for vendors. For a Farmers' Market listing and market manager contacts in Alberta visit Alberta Agriculture's web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca/store/farmers market/index.

"**Farm retailing** and farm gate sales are other venues for marketing meat products direct to consumers," adds Engel. "Farm gate sales are the most popular method with farm retailing quickly expanding Alberta. Farm retailing is more detailed and involves the development of a store or retail outlet."

When it comes to **farm gate** marketing, be sure to work with the local health inspector to determine the requirements in your health authority regarding storage and facility guidelines. Good signage and promotional materials inviting customers onto the farm is essential. Greet vehicles promptly as they enter the farm, or make sure there are clear signs that inform customers where they should park and how or where to make purchases.

A **municipal buying club** is a group of purchasers that preorder product and pick up in a predetermined central location. Development of these clubs primarily evolves out of office buildings or businesses.

Knowing your customer is essential to a successful business. Traditional agriculture is production based. The traditional philosophy is to produce it and then find someone to buy it. This way of thinking needs to change to become market focused. You need to understand your target market, the people who are buying the product. Are your customers filling the deep freeze with beef? Do they like roast, stew and 'less tender' cuts? Direct marketers of meat are finding that they sell more

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'cuts' versus 'halves', and the cuts that disappear are the high-end ones. This increases the need for creative strategies to market the less tender cuts and hamburger.

Here's how some direct marketers are moving low-end cuts of meat:

- supply a pound of hamburger for every set dollar amount purchased. The cost of the hamburger is worked into the cost of the other cuts
- bundle low, medium and high-end cuts into Budget, Family and Fancy packages
- work with your processor to develop unique ethnic or regional value-added products like lean saskatoon/beef sausages, marinated kabobs or cheese-filled smokies
- get inventive in the 'event' department. Working with local event planners, supplying product (hamburger) for things like: open houses, fairs, rodeos and other special events
- rent kiosk space at a mall and sell hamburger. Use this contact with customers to promote your meat business

"When direct marketing meat, and when it comes to regulations involved, it's often beneficial to work with your processor," says Engel. "At the minimum, you will need to have your products slaughtered and processed at a provincially inspected facility. For a listing of provincially inspected facilities visit: www1.agric.gov.ab.ca."

Packaging and labeling regulations also need to be addressed. The Canadian Food inspection agency regulates labeling in Canada. Visit www.cfia-acia.agr.ca for more information on the regulations for packaging and labeling.

"Direct marketers need to decide what makes their product special, unique and different," adds Engel. "Is it family farmed, local, grass-fed, pastured, antibiotic-free? It's important to identify what the product is and why it is valuable. All of the promotional tools you develop need to relay this message too."

Know your costs and pricing the product accordingly is another essential piece of the business plan. If you have a premium product, don't undercut its value. Get out of the pattern of allowing the going market price to determine selling price. Many producers look for alternative markets like selling direct to the consumer when commodity prices are low. "By planning ahead and pricing properly you should not have to increase prices significantly," says Engel. "Direct marketing allows producers the opportunity to have a consistent price for their products despite price fluctuations in the commodity market. If you are in it for the long term your returns will be maintained."

Resources available for farm direct meat marketers:

- ***Farm Direct Marketing Quality Meat Products Direct to the Consumer Checklist*** – developed by the Alberta Agriculture Farm Direct Protein Team. Available on Alberta Agriculture's web site www1.agric.gov.ab.ca under Business Economics/ Ag Entrepreneurship/Farm Direct Marketing or at: http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/app21/rtw selsubj.jsp or by calling the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677
- ***Direct Marketing Meat Information*** series – contact Alberta Agriculture's Protein Team - Rod Carlyon, (780) 349-4466, Bert Dening, (780) 674-8247, Jim Hansen, (403) 653-5132
- ***Explore Direct*** – presents Marketing with More Creativity than Cash workshop series with Jane Eckert during the week of December 1, 2003, at three locations: Pincher Creek, Olds, Leduc. Call (780) 679-1362 for a brochure
- ***Explore Direct: Farmers' Market Study Tours*** – being held on August 23, 2003 in St. Albert and on September 20, 2003 in Millarville. Phone (780) 853-8223 to register
- ***Explore Direct: Festivals and Events*** – being held in two locations: January 21, 2004 in Okotoks; and, January 22, 2004 in Wetaskawin
- ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** newsletter – provides timely, incisive and creative ideas for agriculture entrepreneurs. The ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** is available free of charge by calling Alberta Agriculture's Westlock Office at (780) 349-4466 or e-mailing: kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca, to be added to the mailing list

For more detailed information on farm retailing contact Engel, Farm Direct Marketing initiative at (780) 349-4466.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780)349-4466

The greenhouse business in Alberta

Alberta's greenhouse industry is estimated at 12 million square feet, about 275 acres, and is operated by approximately 400 growers.

"The major crops grown are vegetables, bedding plants, cut flowers, potted ornamentals, foliage plants and tree seedlings," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, business development officer at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton. "The value of the provincial greenhouse industry is estimated to be about $110 million, and the industry is steadily growing."

"Over the last 10 years, the average size of a vegetable greenhouse operation has increased to one acre," adds Nabi Chaudhary, senior economic analyst with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "One acre under cover is considered to be an economic unit for vegetable production."

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Some interesting facts about Alberta's greenhouse industry:

- 42 per cent of greenhouses cover less than 10,000 square feet
- 18 per cent cover over 40,000 square feet
- the cities of Medicine Hat, Red Deer and Edmonton have the largest concentration of greenhouses
- 52 per cent of greenhouses are seasonal, and grow primarily bedding plants
- 48 per cent are year-round operations, and grow mostly vegetables
- Alberta's greenhouse industry employs over 1,400 full time and 3,500 part time workers.

"About 56 acres of greenhouse area in the province is devoted to the production of seedless cucumbers, 23 acres to tomatoes, 10.6 acres to peppers and 2.5 acres to lettuce," says Dr. Nick Savidov, greenhouse crops specialist with Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "Alberta devotes a higher proportion of greenhouse area to the production of cucumbers than the three other provinces with significant greenhouse industries, Ontario, B.C. and Quebec."

An Alberta greenhouse industry profile for 2003 is available on Alberta Agriculture's web site, the industry is described in detail and also basic economic information is provided.

The Greenhouse Business, a bi-monthly newsletter on Alberta's greenhouse industry, is available by calling Mirza (780) 415-2303 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000) or e-mailing moyhuddin.mirza@gov.ab.ca.

Contact: *Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza*
(780) 415-2303
Dr. Nick Savidov
(403) 362-1312
Nabi Chaudhary
(780) 422-4054

4-H'ers celebrate Alberta's beef industry

From July 14 to 16, 2003, over 200 participants took part in the 27th Annual Provincial 4-H Beef Heifer Show. Held in Bashaw Alberta, individuals and teams demonstrated their grooming, judging and showmanship skills.

"I learned a lot about showing cattle," comments Isabel Davis, a freshman at this year's show. "Everyone was very friendly and helpful and I picked up a lot tricks to help me improve for next year."

This year's Supreme Grand Champion Purebred went Robert Dixon of Mannville and his three-year-old, DF Starlet 1K. "Every year the competition gets better and better," comments Dixon. "With some of the industry's top cattle here, I needed a little bit of luck to come out on top."

The winner of the Supreme Grand Champion Crossbred animal was Dustin Lamb of Balzac Beef Club. "I've been to this show quite a few times, but this year has definitely been the best," comments Lamb. "The show gives us a chance to make contacts within the beef industry, catch up with old friends and improve our show skills."

Delegates also competed in a number of events for the Annual Grand Aggregate Awards. This year's winners were Tyson Hertz from John Ware 4-H Beef Club, Danny Hertz from John Ware 4-H Beef Club and Tyson Gardner from Olds 4-H Judging Club.

In addition, delegates took part in the Beef Knowledge Competition. Junior members answered questions pertaining to the beef project in the ***Beef Bowl***, while intermediates answered more difficult trivia questions during ***Beef Jeopardy***. In the ***Senior Team Challenge***, senior members devised plans to encourage Japan to resume trade with the Canadian beef industry. The excitement continued with ***Bashaw Idol*** - this year's talent show.

This program is a success because of the continued support and dedication of sponsors, Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Motor Association Insurance Company, Alberta Treasury Branches, Bashaw & District Agricultural Society, GAS Alberta Inc, Ivomec (Merial Canada Inc), United Farmers of Alberta, Lakeland College, Meyers Norris Penny and Livestock Identification Services Ltd.

Contact: *Provincial 4-H Office*
(780) 422-4H4H
www.4h.ab.ca

Agri-News Briefs

Fresh produce #1 at farmers' markets

In a recent Economic Impact of Farmers' Markets in Alberta study, the Alberta Farmers' Market Association (AFMA) found that 38 per cent of customers attend farmers' markets on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. The three top reasons sited for shopping at farmers' markets were freshness of product, quality of product and support of local producers. Of the consumers polled, over 55 per cent said that they come to buy vegetables and fruit. Many respondent said that they would like to see more vegetables, more fruit, an increased variety in local produce and more organic produce at farmers' markets. There are over 95 Alberta Agriculture Approved farmers' markets in the province. An updated listing is available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca/farmersmarket, by calling Penny Wilkes at (780) 427-4515 or by contacting Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office toll-free in Canada at 1-800-292-5697 or (780) 427-0391 in the Edmonton area.

4-H Heavy Horse Achievement Day

Heavy Horse project members from across Alberta will travel to Olds on August 7, 2003 to participate in the Provincial 4-H Heavy Horse Achievement Day. Sponsored by the United Farmers of Alberta, the event gives delegates a chance to demonstrate the skills they have acquired from hours of practice. The day begins with the judging competition that tests members' project knowledge. Delegates draw from skills learned at workshops and from studying project books as they demonstrate their knowledge of conformation, hoof care and harness parts. Next, members have 30 minutes to decorate their horse's mane and tail for the decorating contest. Participants will then be divided into categories based on the age of their horses. First-year members learn the basics of the heavy horse industry such as the proper walking techniques. Second-year members advance into cart driving practice exercises. Third-year members are allowed to participate in the cart driving section where they start with two-wheeled carts and practice maneuvering the horse. In their fourth year, also called the mature year, members continue to partake in cart driving, but are also allowed to advance into team driving. This involves a higher level of coordination on behalf of the driver since, with two horses, there is double the horsepower. For more information on 4-H, visit the 4-H web site at www.4h.ab.ca or contact the Provincial 4-H Branch at (780) 422-4H4H.

Farmers' market study tour

Farm direct marketers and people considering farm direct marketing will want to attend one of the Alberta Approved Farmers' Market Study Tours. The tours are being held in St. Albert on August 23, 2003 and in Millarville on September 20, 2003. The tours are an opportunity to investigate the feasibility of selling at a farmers' market and learn what makes a farmers' market a destination. St. Albert Downtown Farmers' Market is western Canada's largest outdoor farmers' market An event for the family, over 250 vendors display fresh produce, baking and handicrafts, and there are always free samples and a carnival atmosphere. The Millarville Farmers' Market, which has been in operation for 20 years, is southern Alberta's largest outdoor farmers' market. Over 160 vendors supply fresh vegetables and native fruits, baking and handicrafts, all in a comfortable country atmosphere. Live entertainment, face painting and clowns add to the experience. For more information on the tours and to register, contact Eileen Kotowich, Vermilion (780) 853-8223; Penny Wilkes, Edmonton (780) 427-4514; Marian Williams, Camrose (780) 679-1360; or Kerry Engel, Westlock (780) 349-4466. Government phone numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first.

Provincial 4-H Judging Competition

The 17th Annual Provincial 4-H Judging Competition is being held on August 8 to 10, 2003. Based on their achievements at district and regional 4-H judging competitions, over 70 delegates will be invited to Olds to compete. Delegates will spend three days attending seminars, increasing livestock knowledge and competing in various judging classes of horse, dairy, swine, beef and sheep. Prior to each class, industry experts will explain the ideal characteristics to look for in each livestock species. Delegates provide written and oral reasons for their placings, which are then compared to those of an official judge. After two days of competition, the Top Overall Judge will have the opportunity to represent Alberta at the National Western Stock Show in Denver in January 2004. Nineteen other delegates at this program will earn the right to attend various judging programs in Canada and the U.S., including the Denver National 4-H Roundup; NILE Judging Competition in Billings, Montana; Canadian Western Agribition in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and, the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede Livestock Evaluation Seminar. Exclusively sponsored by ATB Financial, and hosted by the Olds Agricultural Society, the Provincial 4-H Judging Competition is an exciting experience for all who participate. For more information, visit the 4-H web site at www.4h.ab.ca or contact the Provincial 4-H Branch at (780) 422-4H4H.

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Agri-News

August 11, 2003

Alberta Soil Quality Card

Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESA) Soil Quality Monitoring Program has developed an Alberta Soil Quality Card for producers. Producers can use this new tool to assess soil quality in their fields and to complete a do-it-yourself soil quality rating system.

"Assessing soil quality is very important in identifying potential soil problems and in evaluating management practices being used in the field," explains Karen Cannon, AESA soil quality program coordinator. "Because soil quality is difficult to explain and monitor, we often use indicators to give us a reflection of what is happening with soil quality in fields."

The Soil Quality Card uses sensible, farm level indicators and descriptions that qualitatively measure soil quality. Indicators, such as organic matter color, erosion, compaction or salinity, are ranked low, medium or preferred quality.

The indicators were chosen for particular reasons. For example, crop residue cover can be used as an indicator for erosion or organic matter, or infiltration as an indicator for transfer and storage of water.

The Soil Quality Card is easy and quick to use. The only tools required are the Card, a pencil and a shovel. An introduction sheet explains what the Card is and why it is useful to understand soil quality. The introduction also includes a detailed explanation of how to use the Card in the field and a list of management practices that can be used to improve soil quality.

"Typically, farmers would divide their farm into individual fields or assessment sections based on a management practice or a soil type or crop rotation," says Cannon. "A separate Soil Quality Card should be used for each field or section. The first section is a record of field identification and management notes. The second section lists all of the indicators and provides a way to rank the soil quality for each indicator."

Indicator ranking is based on the individual farmer's knowledge and how they feel their soil quality ranks for each one of the indicators. "That's where the subjective part comes in, and why it is useful to have the same person do the assessment every time," adds Cannon. "Some of the soil quality indicators don't change very quickly, so assessments may only need to be done every two to five years."

The score does not represent an absolute value. The idea is not to get a high score, it is to look at individual farms or sections of a farm, and then determine what can be done to improve soil quality.

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Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@gov.ab.ca

Alberta

"We are very proud of this project and the fact that a useful management tool has been developed for producers that can be used to identify problem areas and monitor changes," says Cannon. "We wanted this Card to be used by producers, so during the development we sent copies out to several producers and producer groups and asked for their input. Overall the comments were very positive, and a number of suggestions were incorporated into the final version."

The Soil Quality Cards (Agdex 525-2) can be obtained by contacting Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office at (780) 427-0391 in the Edmonton area or toll free in Canada at 1-800-292-5697. A copy can also be downloaded from Alberta Agriculture's web site at:
www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/app21/rtw/index.jsp.

Contact: Karen Cannon
(780) 427-3432
E-mail: karen.cannon@gov.ab.ca

Marketing with more creativity than cash

"To increase sales during off-peak seasons, host community events," suggests Jane Eckert of Eckert AgriMarketing. "These activities raise the awareness of your farm in the surrounding community and they create traffic during slow times."

"Eckert knows it works," says Karen Goad, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag-Entrepreneurship Division, Grande Prairie. "As one of the leading experts on direct farm marketing in North America, she has used this and other low cost marketing strategies to position her family's orchard as one of the most successful entertainment farms in the U.S."

Find the right group – there must be a good fit between your farm and the community group. Do you have the same target audience? Is the event compatible with your family values and business image? Will the group commit volunteers to work the event or will they provide staff? Is your site compatible in size and style with the proposed event? A black tie event is questionable but a business retreat, antique car show, hiking club meet, garden equipment show or square dance may be a good fit.

Find the right event – think about what your farm has to offer – a scenic setting; available barn or building space; plenty of parking; food service. Being a host means providing rent-free space and parking. You may choose to contribute tents, tables, straw bale seating or other items of comfort that are readily available on the farm or that can be leased with a portion of the admission.

Be open to new opportunities – children's events and farm hosts are a natural fit. Partner with a 4-H club, the SPCA, a local church or school to create events that draw substantial traffic. Children never come alone and they like to come back!

Host an evening mixer for the chamber of commerce. Sign up to be a stop on the rotary club's weekly bus tour for visitors to the community. Collaborate with the United Way on an Easter egg hunt or community harvest celebration. Host a Friends of the Library murder mystery dinner theatre.

Marketing with more creativity than cash – if you would like to learn more about low cost publicity strategies and increasing your marketing impact, attend the ***Explore Direct Marketing With More Creativity Than Cash*** workshops. Eckert will reveal the Number 1 way to attract media coverage, identify strategies to capture customers' attention and bring in repeat business, and she'll share the secrets to maximizing the impact of promotions. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of AVAC Ltd., workshop participants will receive an individualized marketing plan that uses more creativity than cash to access free publicity, as well as a copy of Eckert's newest book for farm direct marketers, ***Fresh Grown Public Relations***.

These workshops are being held in Pincher Creek, Olds and Leduc the first week of December. More information is available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify.

Contact: Karen Goad
(780) 538-5629
e-mail: karen.goad@gov.ab.ca

Using GIS at the Alberta Ag-Info Centre

Some 35,000 years ago, Cro-Magnon hunters drew pictures of the animals they hunted on the walls of caves near Lascaux, France. Associated with the animal drawings are track lines and tallies thought to depict migration routes. This is exactly the type of information that can be produced with the help of GIS and a data source.

"Geographical Information System (GIS) is computer software that is capable of storing, analyzing and displaying geographically referenced information, which is data identified according to location," says Kim Zeleny, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "GIS is able to relate different information in a spatial content and allows us to reach a conclusion about this relationship. The most common products seen of GIS are that of a map. Maps such as the 2003 Bertha Armyworm map posted on the Alberta Agriculture web site are products of GIS."

Cont'd on page 3

All data collected use a location reference system. Longitude and latitude, or legal land locations are used for insect forecast mapping. Insect populations collected at a particular location can be compared with other information, such as weather conditions, and through these relationships, conclusions can be made to explain and predict populations. GIS spatial reveals new information that can help make better management decisions.

"GIS not only accepts data directly, typical forms are spreadsheets, but also can convert existing digital information, such as digital satellite images, that may or may not be in map form," adds Zeleny. "Precision Farming uses Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to tailor soil and crop management decisions to match conditions at every location in the field. In Precision Farming, data is collected in the form of GPS digital satellite images and than GIS is used for managing the information. Getting the information into the GIS system involves identifying the objects on the map, their location on the earth's surface and their spatial relationship."

A GIS makes it possible to link, or integrate, information that is difficult to associate through any other means. GIS can be used to combine aerial photographs, tabular data, digital satellite data or numerous other forms of data to display a spatial representation of all this information. A map might forecast insects across the province, so by using map overlays one can get an idea of the water bodies, streams and rivers, and soils that coincide with various populations that have been mapped.

"GIS is a wonderful and very complex tool that is able to produce maps that allow decision makers to visualize and understand the relationships of information inputted," says Zeleny. "The GIS system and data collection can be costly, but by standardizing data, it's possible to share resources within an organization."

Insect forecasting at the Alberta Ag-Info Centre is currently being focused on but will expand to diseases and other areas related to cropping decisions in the near future. Numerous insects are being surveyed this year and forecast maps will be posted on Alberta Agriculture's web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca.

Contact: *Kim Zeleny*
Alberta-Ag Info Centre
1-866-882-7677
e-mail: kim.zeleny@gov.ab.ca

FGSA field day - excellent learning opportunity

Employees at DNA Gardens in Elnora, Alberta are making ready to host the Fruit Growers Society of Alberta (FGSA) field day on August 14, 2003. "One of the mandates of the FGSA is to provide education to the membership," says Joyce Megson, FGSA executive director. "Because most of the fruit growers are 'hands-on' types, they very much appreciate the field days as an opportunity to experience a learning environment in the orchard."

Delegates will see over a dozen varieties of saskatoons, eight varieties of wild black cherries (otherwise known as choke cherries), nine varieties of sea buckthorn, including two new thornless varieties, and edible honeysuckle, a relatively new crop. New varieties of prairie-hardy cherries have been developed at University of Saskatchewan, and attendees will learn about the potential in cherry orchards. Delegates will also have an opportunity to view a tissue culture display.

"The Alberta fruit industry is experiencing healthy growth", states Bob Stielow, president of the FGSA. "Saskatoon production in 1999 was approximately 600,000 pounds. This year we are expecting in excess of 3,000,000 pounds of saskatoons, and in the Red Deer area alone, over 150,000 pounds of black currants. In order to serve FGSA members and the growing number of orchardists, it is important to provide educational opportunities so that producers can stay up to date with the latest and best varieties and the newest and most efficient equipment. We will have industry fruit experts on hand during the day to answer questions as well as equipment and supply specialists".

Interested persons are asked to pre-register by calling Megson at (403) 748-2289 or by e-mailing megsonj@telusplanet.net. Registration fee for members is $20 and non-members $30. Members and interested public are encouraged to attend this informative event.

Contact: *Joyce Megson*
(403) 748-2289
e-mail: megsonj@telusplanet.net

Young Speakers for Agriculture ready for another year

When you ask someone what is the thing they are afraid of the most – public speaking will outrank the fear of flying and is usually at the top of the list. But each year at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto, Ontario, young men and women from across Canada gather for the Young Speakers for Agriculture (YSA) public speaking competition to demonstrate they are both competent and capable in front of a microphone.

"The YSA public speaking competition is a national event open to young men and women from across Canada between the ages of 16 and 24," says Mark Muchka, 4-H specialist, communications and marketing, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton.

Participants must prepare a five- to seven-minute speech, in either English or French, on one of the following topics:

- Managing information, misinformation, and expectations on the farm
- Sharing the cost of environmental protection
- Looking ahead to another 90 years of 4-H in Canada
- Why my future is in agriculture
- Ensuring the safety of the Canadian food supply

The competition will be held on Saturday, November 8, 2003 at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto and the grand-prize winner of the competition will receive a cash award of $1,000.

Last year's competition attracted over 20 participants from Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec and Prince Edward Island. The overall winner was Kim Waalderbos, of Amherst, Nova Scotia. Johnathan Vanderveen from Calmar, Alberta and Kathleen Leitch from Leduc, Alberta placed second and third.

If you are between the ages of 16 and 24, don't miss the opportunity to participate in the 19th annual competition. Call or write to request your copy of the brochure announcing complete details of this year's competition. Inquiries should be directed to Ted Young, Chairman, at 519-824-9253 or tedyoung@sympatico.ca. Written requests and/or applications should be forwarded to Young Speakers for Agriculture,
P.O. Box 25015, Stone Road Mall Postal Outlet,
370 Stone Road West, Unit 17, Guelph, Ontario N1G 2X0.
Deadline for applications is September 30, 2003. Applications will also be accepted by FAX at (519) 824-4477.

Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Farm Credit Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ontario 4-H, Pioneer Hi-Bred Limited and the Royal Agriculture Winter Fair are proud competition sponsors.

Contact: *Mark Muchka*
(780) 427-0753

Provincial 4-H Dairy Show 2003

On July 16 and 17, 2003, 4-H members from across the province gathered in Red Deer to take part in the 57th Annual Provincial 4-H Dairy Show. Participants were given the opportunity to improve their showmanship, clipping and judging skills while showing off their quality dairy animals. New to the dairy show this year was ***Moo's on the Moo-ve*** a new dairy club from the Barrhead District.

The show began with a ***Dairy Husbandry Quiz*** that encouraged members to learn textbook information about the dairy industry. With this quiz, members worked hard to learn updated project information and expand their knowledge. Delegates later competed in the ***Knowledge Skills Competition***. Junior members participated in a ***Dairy Bowl***, where they answered various dairy industry questions, intermediates were given more advanced questions in ***Dairy Jeopardy*** and seniors built models of a ruminant digestive system.

Later, delegates practiced their judging skill, evaluating classes of spring calves and senior heifers. "Judging encourages 4-H'ers to improve many different skills," comments Linda Reitveld, of the Rockyview Dairy Club and this year's Top Overall Judge. "It makes us think about the ideal characteristics sought after in the dairy industry and forces us to provide reasons supporting our decisions."

Next, delegates had a chance to demonstrate their clipping abilities in the clipping competition where they had two hours to fit a calf that had come straight out of the herd. "Clipping dairy animals is hard work," comments Markus Hehli, of the Usona Dairy Club and Overall winner of the ***Clipping Contest***. "Unlike beef cattle, dairy cattle must be trimmed very short and clipping must be well blended. Clipping also requires a precise eye to create the correct lines and angels to make the calves more appealing."

On the second day, delegates took part in showmanship and confirmation classes. This year's overall winner for both classes was Leanne Hillis of the Lacombe Dairy Club showing her senior heifer.

Sponsored by GAS Alberta Inc, Alberta Holstein Association, Alberta Milk Producers, Livestock Identification Services Ltd, Westerner Exposition Association, Lakeland College and various other dairy industry sponsors, the Provincial 4-H Dairy Show prepares dairy club members to become leaders in the dairy field and continuously build on their skills.

Contact: *Provincial 4-H Office*
(780) 422-4H4H
www.4h.ab.ca

Agri-News Briefs

Safe barbecuing

Follow these tips for preparing, cooking, serving and storing barbecued foods safely:

- clean all cooking equipment, utensils and work surfaces with a mild bleach solution (1 tsp bleach in 3 cups water) then rinse with clean water
- wash hands well with soap and hot water before beginning to prepare food, when switching from one food to another and after touching raw meat, poultry or seafood
- keep raw foods away from cooked foods – don't use the same plate or tray for raw and cooked meats and use different utensils for raw and cooked foods
- keep meats, salads and perishable foods in the refrigerator until ready to use them
- if using a cooler, pack it with freezer packs so the temperature at or below 4°C (40°F)
- keep the cooler in the shade and keep the lid closed as much as possible
- pre-heat the barbecue. If using a charcoal barbecue, use enough charcoal to cook everything and make sure it is glowing red before starting to cook
- pre-cook poultry if possible, then put it on the barbecue immediately
- always check the temperature of the food before you stop cooking to make sure that it has reached a safe internal temperature
- keep all food covered to prevent cross contamination
- eat food as soon as it is ready. If food is to be kept hot for any length of time, make sure the temperature stays at or above 60°C (140°F)
- if food has been held in the danger zone (between 4°C and 60°C - 40°F and 140°F) for two hours or longer, do not keep the food as leftovers
- place leftovers in shallow containers and refrigerate. Cover them when they are cool and reheat to 74°C (165°F) before eating
- eat leftovers within two days

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Agri-News

August 18, 2003

Staged re-opening of U.S. borders

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced a staged re-opening of U.S. borders to some Canadian beef products on August 8, 2003. The announcement that the United States has partially re-opened its borders to Canadian beef is great news for Canadian beef producers and all those who work in the food industry.

The preventive measures that Canada had in place prior to the detection of BSE (import controls, feed bans and surveillance measures conducted at levels that met or exceeded the OIE standards) certainly helped the USDA decide to partially re-open the border.

As of August 8, 2003, USDA will no longer prohibit the importation of hunter-harvested wild ruminant products intended for personal use and it will begin to accept applications for import permits for certain products from Canada, including:

- boneless sheep or goat meat from animals under 12 months of age;
- boneless bovine meat from cattle under 30 months of age;
- boneless Veal (meat) from calves that were 36 weeks of age or younger at slaughter;
- fresh or frozen bovine liver;
- vaccines for veterinary medicine for non-ruminant use; and
- pet products and feed ingredients that contain processed animal protein and tallow of non-ruminant sources when produced in facilities with dedicated manufacturing lines.

"This is extremely good news for the Alberta and Canadian beef industries," said Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, in response to the USDA announcement. "It reflects the hard work and dedication of our federal government, our provincial governments and our national and provincial industry representatives. It is significant that this is the first time the U.S. has opened its borders to a country that has had an incident of BSE.

"We recognized that the U.S. would adopt a staged approach to border openings. Now, we need to continue our work with industry and with other levels of government to facilitate border openings for live cattle and other beef products.

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Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@gov.ab.ca

Alberta

"The USDA announcement verifies that we have one of the best surveillance systems in the world."

As of August 12, 2003, Mexico has also re-opened its borders with similar conditions to that of the U.S.

Contact: *Terry Willock*
Communications
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-7683

For toll-free connection outside Edmonton, dial 310-0000

New horse manure and pasture management manual

Alberta is home to over 300,000 horses, about 35 per cent of all horses in Canada. The sizes of horse operations in the province range from a significant number of small acreages and land holdings, to larger farms and ranches. Every one of these operations has an impact on the landscape and the environment, and manure and pasture management are two key issues for landowners.

To help horse owners address these important issues, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESA) program and the Forage and Horse Branch are releasing a new management tool, part of the ***Caring For Alberta's Rural Landscape*** series, called ***Manure and Pasture Management for Horse Owners***.

"This 54-page manual is designed to help horse owners be environmentally responsible and use good management practices in their operations," explains Christine Sweet, provincial extension coordinator for Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "The manual goes beyond information to help Albertans understand what good management practices are, and provides and describes tools, techniques and steps for implementing proper manure and pasture management strategies."

All horse owners are expected to manage their land base responsibly. Horse industries, including the Pregnant Mare Urine (PMU) industry and feedlot horse operations are currently regulated under the new provincial *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* (AOPA).

"From a manure management standpoint, horse owners need to be aware that they have the potential of damaging the environment," explains Les Burwash, manager of horse programs for Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie. "Horse owners have to be responsible stewards of land that is in their control and manage manure to prevent contamination of waterways or overloading the soil with excess nutrients, such as phosphorus."

One important manure management strategy for horse operations is composting. A joint research project with the Olds College Composting Centre showed that bunker type composting works very well. "This provides horse operations with a very effective way of composting manure out of stables and small holdings, with a minimal amount of capital investment," says Burwash. "Any operation that has the availability of a small tractor or other machine with a loader to turn the manure in the bunkers can easily implement this on their operation." The resulting compost can be spread on the land, or sold as a marketable commodity to horticulture operations or local gardeners.

"The way horses graze presents pasture management challenges that are different from other livestock, such as cattle or sheep," explains Burwash. "Horses tend to be spot grazers, overgrazing some areas and avoiding other areas completely. Smaller land holdings are particularly vulnerable to overgrazing, because of the tendency to overstock the land with horses and the results are often problems with weed infestation and the growth of less productive grasses. With larger farms and ranches, the best pasture management strategy is to maximize pasture use to minimize production costs. By effectively using pasture, managers can increase production efficiency."

"Horse owners will find valuable information about good manure and pasture management practices in ***Manure and Pasture Management for Horse Owners***," says Sweet. "Until now, there hasn't been a publication available with the depth of information and management strategies that horse owners require," says Sweet. "This manual was developed specifically for Alberta horse owners."

The manual (Agdex# 460/27-1) is available free of charge from Alberta Agriculture's publications office,
7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, by calling
(780) 427-5697 in the Edmonton area, toll free in Canada at
1-800-282-5697, or e-mailing: publications.office@gov.ab.ca.

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Eradication of Fusarium graminearum *in the manufacturing of feed pellets*

Fusarium head blight (FHB) is a serious seed borne disease of small grain cereals. In North America, the disease is primarily caused by Fusarium *graminearum*.

"F. *graminearum* is infrequently detected in Alberta wheat and barley seed and is not a common component of the soil microflora," says Jim Calpas, provincial integrated pest management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Prevention is an option for control of fusarium head blight where F. *graminearum* is not already well established. Alberta is a net importer of feed for its livestock feeding industry and there is concern about the potential introduction of quantities of F. *graminearum* inoculum through imported feed grain and feed pellets."

Feed pellets are often scattered on the ground during feeding of range cattle. There is concern that these range pellets, if made from F. *graminearum* infected grain products, could serve as a source of introducing amounts of F. *graminearum* over a wide area of Alberta.

A recent research study conducted by Calpas and Krishan Kumar, lab technician with Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Division, Edmonton, has demonstrated that the temperatures and exposure times typically used in feed pellet production process can eradicate F. *graminearum* present in the raw product used to make the pellets.

"The survival of F. *graminearum* is a function of temperature and time with decreased survival at higher temperatures and longer exposure times," says Calpas. "A minimum temperature of 90°C is required to eradicate F. *graminearum* at an exposure time of 45 seconds. A minimum temperature of 85°C is required to eradicate F. *graminearum* at exposure times of 60 and 90 seconds, and 80°C is required at an exposure time of 120 seconds."

Contact: Jim Calpas
(780) 422-4911

New manual helps producers reduce energy costs

Agriculture businesses face rising costs for many things, including energy. Significantly increased energy costs over the past several months means that farmers and ranchers are paying more for electricity, natural gas, and even diesel and gasoline. To combat these increasing costs, farmers and ranchers are reviewing how they use energy in their operations, and are looking for ways to reduce costs, improve energy efficiency and reduce impacts on the environment. Just by implementing small changes such as turning out lights or turning down the heat can cut energy costs by 10 to 20 per cent, depending on current operating efficiencies.

"The newly published ***First Steps to Energy Management*** will help farmers and ranchers better understand what their energy use is for their operation," explains Tamara Lewis, conservation economics agrologist with Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development's AESA (Alberta's Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture) Program. "We partnered with the AgTech Centre in Lethbridge to develop an easy to use energy audit to help farmers and ranchers examine their farm energy bills to see how much energy is used and what the associated costs are."

The manual is any easy way to record and track energy use on the farm. *Bill Trackers* have been developed to help farmers and ranchers track their use of energy sources, such as electrical, natural gas, diesel fuel and gasoline. An Alternative Energy *Bill Tracker* has also been included to track other energy sources that may be used, such as biomass, propane, coal, solar and wind. "The *Bill Trackers* are designed to record and analyze 12 months of energy billing information," says Lewis. "It's necessary to record for 12 months to be able to account for production fluctuations and changes in use throughout the year, and ensure the bills accurately reflect those changes. If the 12 months recorded are not considered to be a typical year, it may be useful to refer to additional records before implementing any major changes."

An energy audit is the first step in energy management. Completing an energy audit makes users more aware of their input costs, and helps identify where energy use can be reduced or energy can be used more efficiently. The audit can help determine how to reduce the impact of energy price fluctuations, and help producers understand and identify spikes in energy use. As part of the energy audit, users develop an action plan for their operation.

"One of the most important things to remember about the energy audit manual, is that it is an awareness tool," says Katrina Lakenman, engineer-in-training with Alberta Agriculture's AgTech Centre in Lethbridge. "You need to know what the energy consumption and costs are first, before any changes in efficiency can be measured." Once energy consumption and costs have been measured, users can analyze why costs have increased even though production hasn't and take steps to make changes where necessary.

"We always tell farmers and ranchers that it is easier to save a watt than it is to produce a watt," says Lakenman. "Once they have information about where they are using energy they can look at different ways to save."

For example, when reviewing how equipment is used, producers could consider whether lights are being left on all the time, or if ventilation fans are clean and running efficiently or are running more often because they are dirty. Ensuring

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equipment is maintained properly is important and keeping up with simple things, such as changing oil and routine maintenance checks, can make a bottom-line difference. When reviewing lighting systems, consider whether a change to a computerized system would reduce usage. Determine if heating systems could be controlled differently. Identify regular maintenance systems that should be implemented as preventative measures.

"Once a producer has measured and analyzed their use, the next step is to implement ways to change or to reduce what activities and practices to reduce energy usage," says Lakenman. "After every effort has been made to reduce energy usage, the next step may be to consider implementing alternative energy systems. However, they can also be very expensive, so it's important to ensure all ways of reducing energy consumption have been considered first."

Along with the ***First Steps to Energy Management*** (Agdex# 818-2), a separate factsheet has been developed to specifically address lighting issues. The factsheet ***Save Hundreds on your Energy Costs*** (Agdex# FS 452/771-1) provides an example, using a broiler chicken operation, of how to save money by switching lighting fixtures from incandescent to fluorescent lighting. "By moving from incandescent to fluorescent lighting the energy savings can be four to one," says Lewis.

The manual and factsheet are available free of charge from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling the Publications Office at (780) 427-0391 in the Edmonton area, toll free in Canada at 1-800-292-5697, or e-mailing: publications.office@gov.ab.ca.

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Plan ahead for winter wheat

Harvesting of winter wheat has begun and, in spite of the dry conditions this summer, yields are doing very well. It is anticipated that winter wheat acres will increase this next year, especially if timely rains fall.

"Producers planning to seed winter wheat should start planning now," says Don Wentz, reduced tillage agronomist with Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, Lethbridge. "Line up your seed supply by checking the ***Alberta Seed Guide*** on page 86 for certified winter wheat seed producers. As well, you can check the ***Winter Wheat Forum*** page on the Reduced Tillage LINKAGES (RTL) web page, hosted on the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development web site. Producers with seed for sale often advertise on this web page."

The Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) has a new program that will put the price for quality winter wheat between No. 2 and 3 Canada Western Red Spring wheat. The Select Program for Canadian Western Red Winter (CWRW) increases contract price by $10 per tonne for winter wheat that is over 11.5 per cent protein and increases by $0.30 tonne for each additional 0.1 per cent up to 14 per cent. There is also an escalating increase for on-farm storage.

To qualify, you must plant certified seed in year-one, and for year-two, you can use seed one year removed from certification. Always keep seed receipts for future verification. Varieties that qualify are AC Bellatrix, AC Readymade, AC Tempest, CDC Buteo, CDC Osprey , McClintock and Norstar. Contact the local elevator agent for more details, contact the CWB at 1-800-275-4292, or look up all the details on the CWB web site at www.cwb.ca/en/growing/market_testing/index.jsp#CWRWSelectQualityCompensation.

For more information on growing winter wheat, go to the RTL web site at www.reducedtillage.ca/index.html, click on *Knowledge Tidbits* and open the pull-down screen. Click on *Winter Cereals* at the bottom and this will open a page with more information. If you click on the University of Saskatchewan Home Page, for example, it will open another page, click on UofS Home Page again and item four of that page is the ***Winter Wheat Production Manual – Table of Contents***. There are a number of topics related to winter wheat production in this manual.

"Winter wheat is a good cropping choice because it fits well into conservation faming, especially direct seeding," adds Wentz. "Winter wheat is more competitive with weeds, which means that there is less herbicide required, especially for wild oats. There is less risk of disease, especially Fusarium head blight because the winter wheat matures early. It also helps to better utilize seeding and harvest equipment by spreading out the seeding and harvest window and has a high yield potential because it matures earlier than most spring wheat. Winter wheat has a benefit to wild life habitat as well."

Reduced Tillage LINKAGES activities continue to encourage producers to plant more winter wheat acres. The RTL WEB page, www.reducedtillage.ca contains information referenced above. It is a knowledge-based web site that contains information on all aspects of reduced tillage from equipment to soil and plant diseases. The site received an average of 153 hits per day in 2002. RTL agronomists have their own page that highlights activities specific to their region. As well the site has information on up coming events for both RTL and related agricultural events. Links to other web pages and to Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's site, make it easy to find additional information on reduced tillage and related management issues.

Contact: *Don Wentz*
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Research and field trials on-going at CDC South and North

The Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS) is one of the research and development units of the Crop Diversification Division of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Along with the CDC North, in Edmonton, the Centre's focus is on applied research and technology transfer in support of horticulture, special crop, forage seed and agronomy in the province.

"The programs that staff at CDCS and CDCN get involved with specialize in research to support sustainable growth of crop industries such as: potato, fruit and vegetable, greenhouse, nursery, grass and forage seed, special and field crops," says Dr. Christine Murray, branch head at CDCS, Brooks. "The plant pathology program leads research in support of many of the crop industries. The 2002 CDC South and North Annual Report provides short descriptions of all of the crop research and extension projects lead by our staff."

Interesting facts and information on the projects currently being worked on at CDCS and CDCN are included in the Annual Report, which is posted on Alberta Agriculture's web site at: http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca. Hard copies are also available from by contacting Shelley Barkley, information officer at CDCS (403) 362-1308.

Inside the Annual Report you will find information such as:

- at CDCS in 2002, the coldest day of the year, -36.0°C occurred in March, the hottest day, 35.5°C in July, for a 71.5°C range over the year (*Meterological Report*, pg. 40).
- a paper was published in the Canadian Journal of Soil Science on the work being done at the Centre that is exploring the long term evaluations of six different crop rotations on soil quality and economic viability in the brown soil zone (*Long term crop rotations in Brown soil zone*, pg. 3).
- black currant is a highly productive crop with more juice per acre and a greater source for vitamin C than oranges, and is a preferred confection and fruit drink flavour in Europe (*Integrated crop management of black currants in Alberta*, pg. 6).
- some perennial grass species, for amenity grass and forage seed crops, that are being tested include: Kentucky bluegrass, smooth bromegrass, creeping red, meadow, mountain and tall fescues, Festulolium, intermediate wheatgrass and blue wildrye (*Perennial grass seed production trials*, pg. 8).
- preliminary data showed that carnauba wax was the most efficient edible coating, almost doubling the shelf life of greenhouse grown peppers (*Edible coatings for greenhouse vegetables*, pg. 10).
- trap cropping for cabbage seedpod weevil, an integrated crop management practice suitable for this emerging canola pest, was demonstrated at four field scale sites in southern Alberta (*Demonstration and research support*, pg 13).
- when trees are harvested from a nursery as little as five per cent of the root system is retained within the rootball. These roots must provide sufficient water and nutrients for the tree while being held before sale and various holding systems were evaluated for their effectiveness (*The evaluation of six systems of holding harvested trees during the shipping season*, pg. 15).
- in 2001, 50 commercial chickpea fields were surveyed for diseases, 41 had low levels of aschochyta blight and root rot (*Occurrence of chickpea diseases in Alberta 2001 and 2002*, pg 19).
- eight vine kill strategies were studied for Russet Burbank potatoes to determine how much tuber bulking occurs during vine kill (*Russet Burbank vine management*, pg. 22).
- Quadris was applied in-furrow to Russet Burbank potatoes, yields and rhizoctonia control were monitored (*On-farm Demonstration with the Alberta Mobile Potato Demonstration Farm*, pg. 23).
- the skin colour retention of several red potato varieties in the CDCN Seed Potato Repository was determined (*Red skin colour trial*, pg. 25).
- potato crops have many characteristics that make them suitable for precision agriculture systems, such as costly inputs of fertilizer pesticides and water (*Site specific management of potatoes*, pg 26).
- interest in rosemary extracts as anti-oxidants in commercial food preparation lead to a study to evaluate growing rosemary as an annual crop in Alberta (*Impact of growing conditions on plant growth and medicinal quality of rosemary*, pg. 32).
- a project was developed to compare adaptability between major and minor special crops including: yarrow, dill, arnica, quinoa, black cohosh, caraway, safflower and others (*Preliminary comparative agronomic evaluation of new crops*, pg 36).

For further information, or if you have questions about publications, presentations, research projects, or if the Annual Report sparks a great idea you would like to pursue, please contact CDCS and CDCN staff at (403) 362-1306 or (780) 422-1789.

Contact:	*Dr. Christine Murray*	*Shelley Barkley*
	(403) 362-1313	*(403) 362-1308*

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Agri-News Briefs

Central Alberta Beef Rally and BBQ

The Alberta Country Opry has taken up the Eat Beef challenge and organized the Central Alberta Beef Rally and BBQ, a two-day barbecue and concert event to raise awareness of how serious the closed borders are for all Albertans and Canadians. On August 22 and 23, 2003 at the Red Deer Westerner Grounds, a stage-full of Alberta musicians, including George Fox, Michael Carey and many others will supply the entertainment. Gates open at noon and participating restaurants will be flipping burgers all day long on both days. Participating Alberta restaurants have been challenged to 'put their best Alberta beef burger forward'. The cook-off runs from 4:00 until 6:30 on August 22, and the winning burger will be announced that evening. Rally attendees will be asked to cast a vote to support their favorite burger. Along with the vote comes a chance to win dinner for two from the winner of the Best Burger in Alberta Contest. Corb Lund, will be performing on August 23 at the Memorial Centre, and Alberta Beef barbecue burgers and steaks will be available from noon on as well. Admission cost for the rally and barbecue is $10 per person and the price of admission includes the show, children 10 years of age and under are free. Burger tickets can be purchased at a cost of $2 each and beverages will also be available for purchase. Experts from the beef industry, vets scientists and producers will also be on hand to answer questions and explain what Mad Cow Disease really is and how we can all do our part to support Alberta's cattle industry. More volunteers are needed. For anyone wanting to step forward and help or for further information about the event, contact Cindy Glover at (403) 309-2776.

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Agri-News

August 25, 2003

Vegetables for better nutrition

Vegetables are healthy, but they could be even better. Comparisons of old and new nutritional values suggest that the nutritional value of vegetables is declining.

"There are a number of research groups working on reversing this trend and actually develop cultivars that contain particularly high levels of vitamins, minerals, and other compounds with specific health benefits," says Dr. Nick Savidov, greenhouse research specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "Examples include carrots with high levels of beta carotene (vitamin A) developed by breeders at the University of Wisconsin and elsewhere; a broccoli variety particularly rich in glucosinolates, bred by researchers at the John Innes Centre in Norwich, U.K.; and, lycopene-rich tomatoes and watermelons, being developed in the U.S. and elsewhere."

At the CDCS, research is being conducted to increase calcium levels in field and greenhouse vegetables. The objective of this work is to develop crop management practices and post-harvest treatments that will improve the nutritional quality of vegetables through improved shelf life and increased calcium content. Results of this work will benefit vegetable growers (fresh market, greenhouse, or processing) by enabling them to supply consumers with a superior product that will contribute toward a healthier diet.

"We chose to focus our initial efforts on calcium because it is a key nutrient in human nutrition," adds Savidov. "Calcium is also an essential element for plants. Deficiency of calcium often causes yield loss and poor quality."

In plants, calcium has several important functions. It is a component of cell walls and is responsible for binding cells together. High levels of calcium tend to strengthen the structural integrity of plant tissues, which in turn can increase shelf life. Calcium also regulates many physiological processes in plants, such as response to a stress.

"When it comes to human nutrition, adequate calcium intake is a key factor in the prevention of osteoporosis, a major health concern in North America. The recommended dietary intake is between 1000 and 1500 mg of calcium per day," says Chris Neeser, fruit and vegetable research specialist with CDCS. "We believe that vegetables with increased calcium levels will provide more options for consumers to satisfy their calcium requirements."

Current research projects aim to increase calcium in field grown vegetables through repeated foliar applications of calcium chloride. Preliminary results show that foliar application can increase calcium content by at least

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30 per cent in leafy vegetables, such as lettuce. Similar results were produced with greenhouse vegetables that were coated by calcium-fortified film. It is expected that the coated vegetable will have improved shelf life and nutritional qualities.

"Results of this work are expected to be released later this fall," notes Neeser. "Although, calcium fortification is a new technology for Alberta, the beneficial effect of calcium treatments was established by researchers in many countries, including the U.S., European countries and Israel. It is hoped that this research will contribute to better positioning of Alberta's vegetables in domestic and export markets."

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Nick Savidov (403) 362-1312

When new rural neighbours move in

New neighbours can be an exciting proposition. New residents moving onto a rural property or onto an acreage subdivided out of a quarter can be a boon to a rural area suffering from declining numbers and perhaps having a difficult time keeping schools and other services open.

"Living in rural Alberta today, people face one of two dilemmas," says Dean Lien, Farmers' Advocate, Edmonton. "It's either a depopulation crisis, where schools close because there are too few students, or it means an influx of non-farm acreage owners who, through no fault of their own, have no concept of rural living. The scenario of depopulation is by far the most critical since a lack of people leads to a lack of activities and services. On the other hand, repopulating by increasing the number of acreage owners or recreation property owners can bring continuity to schools, churches and services; plus, additional facilities are often developed."

Sometimes, however, the 'new kids on the block' – or the range road, don't understand the rural way of life, or that farmers do have the freedom to farm. The adjustment happens eventually, and therefore, farmers must be patient until understanding prevails. In the meantime, it is natural that some situations will test neighbourly relations.

"Pets straying from the property, the farmer's livestock coming up to the fence, the dust that flies during some farm activities, calves bawling when being weaned, combines roaring late into the night, irrigation pumps that can at times run 24 hours a day for a week straight, hog operations and the odours that are part of spreading manure, these are all things that may be strange and unfamiliar to new rural citizens," says Lien. "It's seldom that a conflict actually evolves, and when it does, it's usually because of some minor gap in understanding."

Recently, the Farmers' Advocate addressed an audience and said, "If real estate agents and brokers would spend more time learning about rural life and then explain it to these new rural residents, most complaints would never happen." A greater understanding of items such as the maintenance of water wells, fencing requirements, livestock confinement, dust controls, trespass legislation and the understanding of liens, caveats and easements would eliminate many of the problems.

Lien advises that the next time someone moves into your quiet rural setting, be prepared for the possibility of a few complaints. More importantly, though, welcome the new neighbour, give yourselves a chance to get to know each other and help them adjust to their new rural lives. "It's much better to make a new friend, be a better neighbour and welcome the new addition to the community – they may help keep schools and other services open in the area."

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(780) 427-2433

Government phone numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first

Post-harvest considerations for horticulture crops

As harvest time approaches for the majority of horticulture crops, producers' focus can often be on marketing the product. A great deal of time and effort has gone into producing the crop, and without proper care, a percentage of the crop can be lost due to inappropriate or improper post-harvest handling of the harvested product.

"Once the mature crop is separated from the plant, deterioration can be rapid, as the harvested product continues to lose water and be physiologically active," says Robert Spencer, irrigated and specialty crops specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "Mature crops are also more susceptible to pathogens, due to aging tissues and potential wounds."

A number of steps can be taken to prolong the post-harvest lifespan of horticulture crops and ensure delivery of a quality product to market:

1. **Harvest produce at the correct stage of development** (avoid over-ripe or immature) – immature or over-ripe produce stores differently than mature produce. The more mature a harvest product is, the harder it is to store and the quicker it needs to be marketed. Overripe produce often breaks down rapidly and will accelerate ripening of adjacent produce. Immature produce may need to be handled differently to ensure marketable quality. Some crops will ripen after harvest, provided that they are physiologically mature, while others will stay at the stage and condition they are harvested at.

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2. **Minimize wounding or damage** – minimizing harvest damage can improve storability of most crops. Wounds are an open door for the entry of post-harvest pathogens and can increase moisture loss dramatically. Curing can improve storability of onions and potatoes, as this can allow some level of wound healing and will tighten up skins. These same crops will benefit from a top-kill procedure or lifting, as this improves skin set and preparation for harvest. Careful and minimal handling of most crops will reduce the level of damage and improve the quality. Some crops should be packaged in the field to reduce handling.
3. **Cool the harvested product off** – harvested produce continues to be physiologically active after removal from the plant. For most produce, removing field heat will slow aging and decrease metabolic activity and respiration. Harvesting the crop in cool conditions will reduce the amount of heat that needs to be removed and will reduce cold storage costs. Heat removal can be accomplished in a number of ways, including packing in ice slurries or using forced air, vacuum cooling or room cooling. The choice of cooling method will depend on the type of produce, as some crops are sensitive to free or surface moisture, some crops are stored in bulk or separately and some crops will not tolerate excessive cooling.
4. **Carry out grading procedures** – post-harvest grading can include trimming, washing, grading for size/uniformity, etc. and will improve salability. Removing material, such as damaged leaves, cull product and excessively damaged or diseased produce, will improve the overall post-harvest quality. Damaged material can accelerate ripening of adjacent produce and increase the likelihood of disease development and spread. Washing of produce is acceptable for some crops as this improves salability and removes dirt, pathogens and spray residues. Wash water must be disinfected regularly, as contamination can take place. Note that some crops are sensitive to disinfectants, such as bleach.

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Beef for the freezer

Producers who are considering direct marketing beef need to be prepared to answer client questions, inform them about the product being offered, and let them know what they can expect from their purchase.

"Some of the language and terms used in the beef industry, such as finish, grade, aging, dressing percentage, yield, maturity, rib eye, may not mean a great deal to a new client," says Jim Hansen, business development specialist – beef with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Cardston. "However, when industry terms are explained to clients, they can help explain the product."

Some terms that should be explained to new clients:

- **Aging:** practice of holding beef carcasses and/ or cut up sections of vacuum packaged cuts at 0 to 2°C for a period of time (7 to 28 days) so that natural enzymes can tenderize and add flavor to the meat.
- **Finish:** is fat and there are four types, external, internal, intermuscular, and intramuscular. The amount of external fat deposited on a carcass is of major importance in determining retail yield from the carcass
- **Dressing percentage:** the yield of carcass weight relative to the live weight of the animal. The major factors influencing dressing percentage are, 1) amount of fill 2) finish or degree of fatness 3) muscling. A youthful carcass will range from 54 to 62 per cent
- **Grade:** eating quality assessment of the carcass. In Canada, grading is federally regulated and is a voluntary program. Canada's top quality grades are Prime, AAA, AA and A
- **Marbling:** the fat found within the muscle fibers (intramuscular), flecks of fat within the lean. The amount of marbling is graded in younger animals as A-trace, AA-slight, AAA-small, Prime-slightly abundant. It is said that marbling increases palatability by increasing tenderness, juiciness and flavor
- **Yield assessment:** carcasses are assessed for what the expected lean meat yield might be. This is done only on the carcasses being graded for eating quality. There are three categories, Canada 1 - estimated yield 59 per cent or more; Canada 2 - 54 to 58 per cent; and, Canada 3 - 53 per cent or less

"All meat being sold directly to consumers must be processed in a licensed facility so that the product is inspected and approved for health and safety standards," adds Hansen. "Not all processors provide a meat grading service. Inspection is mandatory for meat that is being sold, while grading is a voluntary program used for marketing purposes."

From live animal to hanging carcass, further fabrication is required to put the primal cuts into steak, roasts, stew meat and hamburger. There is a considerable amount of cutting loss on each carcass, the main factors being fat and bone. Cutting instructions given to the processor has a profound effect on the number of pounds of product that makes it to the freezer. Considerations such as bone in or out, close trim of external fat, all make a difference when it comes to the finished product.

"A simple explanation of processing steps and of the loss that occurs will give clients a greater understanding of what is involved in providing the end product for them to take home," says Hansen.

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As an example of cutting loss, if live weight is 1350 lb. and has a dressing percentage of 58 per cent and a yield grade Canada 1, which is 59 per cent or more:

a. 1350 lb. live weight x 58 per cent dressing per cent = 783 lb. carcass

b. 783 lb. carcass x 59 per cent = 462 lb. expected meat yield

"Taking a little time with clients to teach them about the product, can build trust, understanding and help you meet their expectations," says Hansen. "Go the extra mile in your service. New clients might really appreciate receiving a guide on how to cook various cuts along with their first order. The Beef Information Center in Calgary has information available that you can provide to clients. Producers are welcomed to contact the Centre at (403) 275-5890."

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Provincial 4-H Horse Classic 2003

The 9th Annual Provincial 4-H Horse Classic attracted horse enthusiasts from all over Alberta. Held at Olds College from July 30 to August 2, 2003, the program incorporated 89 members from 24 horse clubs and over 70 volunteer leaders.

"This program encourages participants to use their knowledge and experience as much as possible. The program actively develops 4-H members' skills by comparing horse knowledge and working on both team and individual activities. The generous support from program sponsors makes it possible to have three industry/project clinics during the program," comments Janet Kerr, 4-H specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Stettler.

Horse Classic presented numerous horse clinics that introduced delegates to exciting opportunities. Clinics included a Young Horse Clinic with presentations on the Wild Rose Equine Ranching Association (WRERA) horse project and how to work with foals and young horses and a Barrel-Racing Clinic.

Delegates participated in a variety of challenges. Teams were asked questions regarding the knowledge they had gained during the Team Horse Bowl Contest. Teams and individuals also gave illustrated talks on equine related topics in the presentation sections, and members were given a scenario where they were challenged to develop a print advertisement for a program, item, animal or person in the Print Marketing Contest. In addition, individuals practiced their communication and presentations skills as they tried to sell a horse whose history and pedigree was displayed to the assembled buyers during the Marketing Contest.

Registered participants of Horse Classic were also entered in the Hippology Contest that tested members' equine knowledge in five phases including knowledge stations, live horse judging, a quiz, identification stations and team problems. The top four senior members, based on individual hippology points, qualified for the Denver Western 4-H Roundup from January 7 to 11, 2004. This year's winners were Shannon Clarahan from Pembina North 4-H Club, Angela King from Circle V 4-H Multi, Chelsea Thiessen from Coaldale 4-H Equestrian and Kelsey Bignell from the Big Valley Outriders.

In the horse bowl team final, Lindsay Unruh, Angela King, Avery Unruh, and Dalyce Unruh of Circle V 4-H Multi placed first and Katie Murphy, Lakedell 4-H Lighthorse Club, Robyn Ramey, Silver Valley 4-H Riders, Daniel Grover, Rainbow Riders 4-H Horse and Shannon Clarahan from the Pembina North 4-H Club, were runners up.

Taking first place in the team illustrated talk contests were the *Category One* pair of Jessica and Jennifer Ruskowsky of the Lakedell 4-H Lighthorse Club and the *Category Two* pair of Janet Kelly and Amanda Elzinga of the Edson 4-H Multi Club. Top individual presenter in the illustrated talk contest for *Category One* was Chelsea Nielson of the Killam 4-H Lighthorse Club and first place honours for *Category Two* went to Kelsey Bignell of the Big Valley Outriders 4-H Club.

Print Marketing class winner for *Category One* was Anthony Murphy of the Lakedell 4-H Lighthorse Club, *Category Two* was Hope Eaton of Neutral Hills Rodeo Wranglers and Category Three, Roberta Templeton of the Coaldale 4-H Equestrian.

Oral Marketing class winners were *Category A:* Melissa Grover from the Rainbow Riders 4-H Club, Category B: Erica Lee of Big Valley Outriders, *Category C:* Kelly-Dawn Clarahan of the Meadowview 4-H Multi, *Category D:* Lucas Grover of Big Valley Outriders, *Category E:* Jessica Wilkinson of the Willow Creek Wranglers 4-H and *Category F:* Chelsea Thiessen of the Coaldale 4-H Equestrian Club.

Sponsors of the event include: Alberta Motor Association Insurance Company, Burwash Brand Horse Gear, GAS Alberta Inc, Lammle's Western Wear, Legal Alfalfa Products, Livestock Identification Services Ltd, Masterfeeds, Olds College, SSG Gloves and United Farmers of Alberta.

For more information, visit the 4-H web site at www.4h.ab.ca or contact Janet Kerr at (403) 742-7547.

Contact: *Janet Kerr*
(403) 742-7547

4-H'ers uncover the truth that lies within

From July 22 to 27, 2003, over 115 youth from across the province took part in Provincial 4-H Club Week. Sponsored by Agricore United, Agrium, Alberta Motor Association, Meyers Norris Penny and Olds College, Club Week gave 4-H members the opportunity to meet and discuss issues of concern to them. This year's topics included human rights, values, nationalism, pop culture, family, friends and communication. While following the theme ***The Truth that Lies Within***, Club Week challenged delegates to dig deeper, fight harder and reach farther to discover the immense treasures that lie within themselves.

"Club Week was amazing! It dared me to evaluate my beliefs and who I am as an individual," comments Leah Sallis of Kleskun 4-H Multi. "I left the program with greater self awareness and understanding of others. The program was very rewarding and I would definitely encourage all 4-H members to pursue this one-of-a-kind experience."

In the Celebration of Overcoming Adversity session guest speakers, Barry Lindeman, Ella and Lou Iantkow, Lynda Fraise and Pat Jarvis talked to the delegates about the challenges they have faced such as paralysis, blindness, burns and amputation. In addition, Jan Underwood, of the Central Alberta Refugee Effort, led a human rights session with two refugees who have immigrated to Canada; the Alberta Motor Association's, Dawn Green, presented Mission Possible, a talk on road safety; president of the Canadian 4-H Council, Maryann Carson, spoke on 4-H; and, Dr. Darrel Morrow from Red Deer College talked about leadership, team building and community development.

"I gained the most from the Overcoming Adversity session. The speakers showed me a different way to look at life and what is important, I found their messages very moving and empowering," says Kristen Hedley of Consort Creative Hands 4-H Club 4-H Club. "The week was full of valuable lessons that I can apply throughout various aspects of my life, it taught me to live life to the fullest with no regrets."

Delegates were also given the unique experience of hanging out with 4-H'ers from Montana. In correlation with the Selections trip to Bozeman Montana, where four Alberta delegates will travel to take part in the Montana 4-H Congress, three delegates and a chaperone from Montana came to enjoy the excitement at Club Week. This allowed participants to see how 4-H is run in different areas and meet some wonderful new friends.

Club Week provided many exciting activities throughout the week. Highlights included a masquerade dance, where delegates dressed as undercover agents and super heroes in keeping with the summer's spy theme, and a talent show that sported a tropical theme where participants donned leis and took part in a Hawaii 5-0 barbeque. Participants also enjoyed mini-Olympics, which incorporated group challenges, a fringe festival of team games and a final banquet complete with a candle lighting ceremony.

Through active participation in these activities, sessions and discussions, delegates learned to identify various attitudes and beliefs pertaining to youth and left the program with a greater sense of self-confidence. Mark Szybunka of Cherhill 4-H Multi Club states, "The week was awesome, I had so much fun and came away with some amazing friendships, there was no pressure and everyone could just be themselves. Club Week was definitely one of the best 4-H programs I have ever been to and I would recommend it to everyone."

For more information about 4-H, visit www.4h.ab.ca or contact the Provincial 4-H Office at (780) 422-4H4H.

Contact: *Mark Shand*
(403) 948 8508

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Agri-News Briefs

Spruce Meadows tournament

The ***2003 Masters Tournament*** is being held at Spruce Meadows on September 3 to 7, 2003. The Masters, held at the world-class Spruce Meadows facility, was voted the *L'Annee Hippique Best Show Jumping Event of 2002* by the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI). The Masters, as well as featuring several classes of jumpers, hosts the TELUS Battle of the Breeds, a competition that includes compulsory skills, precision driving, barrel racing, trail riding and jumping. A Hannoverian Mare Show rounds out the week's event. As a special treat, the King's Division Waterloo Band from Great Britain will be performing each day. Reserved seating is sold our for the Masters, however, general admission tickets to Spruce Meadows tournaments, indoor and outdoor, are available at the gate upon arrival. Once admissions has been purchased, visitors are free to sit anywhere in the 'rush seating' and walk through the facility. A general admission ticket entitles you to free parking and includes gate admission. Admission fee is $5 for adults and teens, seniors and children 12 and under are free. Early arrival is suggested. Further information and contact links are available on the Spruce Meadows web site at www.sprucemeadows.com.

What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile Virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus that can cause inflammation of the brain and spinal cord in horses, birds and humans. WNV was first discovered in Uganda in 1937 and is widespread in Africa and Eurasia. Since being identified in the New York area in 1999, WNV has also become established in the eastern United States. By the end of 2002, it had nearly spread across the North American continent. WNV infection in horses is a Reportable Disease under *Alberta's Livestock Diseases Act*. This means anyone suspecting or knowing of a case of WNV infection in a horse must report it to the Chief Provincial Veterinarian (780) 427-3448 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first). People and animals get West Nile Virus infection from the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus, typically by feeding on wild birds. There is no evidence that WNV can be spread from birds to humans or animals, or from horse to horses or humans. Answers to frequently asked questions have been posted to the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development web site at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/ from this home page, click on ***West Nile Virus: Frequently Asked Questions*** in the Highlights section.

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Agri-News

September 1, 2003

Market adjustment program supports Alberta's cattle industry

A market adjustment program designed to stimulate the province's cattle marketplace began on Monday, August 25, 2003.

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development announced the Alberta Fed Cattle Competitive Market Adjustment Program on August 22, 2003. The program encourages producers to sell slaughter weight fed heifers or steers by compensating them on a sliding scale. Unlike the competitive bid program, the new program will not include an option for producers to set aside a portion of their own herd. Rather, all cattle will be required to enter the competitive marketplace.

"With no trade in live cattle to the U.S., and without any federal or provincial support to producers, our marketplace ground to a halt this week," says McClellan. "We hope this market adjustment program will spur sales and increase prices until borders open further and near-normal market conditions are restored."

McClellan states that to allow marketplace conditions to prevail, total program costs, number of eligible animals and program end-dates are not public at this point.

"We will provide a full accounting to Albertans when this program ends, but to release information prior would affect marketplace conditions and therefore the integrity of the program," she adds. "As well, we will closely monitor this program on a weekly basis. If it isn't achieving what we intended, we'll adjust it or eliminate it. A thorough audit process, including field audits, will be implemented to ensure the integrity of all BSE compensation programs."

The Fed Cattle Competitive Market Adjustment Program, like others offered by the province, was developed in full consultation with Alberta's cattle industry. More program information is available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca. Application forms are available directly from the Rural Services Division at (780) 422-9167.

Contact: *John Knapp*
Director, Rural Services Division
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 415-9755

Terry Willock
Communications Director
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-7683

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Ag-Info Centre celebrates the 100,000th call

Helping Alberta's producers with expert agricultural and business management advice, employees at the Alberta Ag-Info Centre have now answered more than 100,000 calls and boast a client satisfaction rate of 92 per cent.

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, was at the Centre on August 22, 2003 to help celebrate this milestone and answer the 100,000th call. "The number of producers the staff has helped is proof of how invaluable the Ag-Info Centre has become," she says. "Producers know that expert advice on all agriculture-related topics is just a toll-free phone call away."

In the most recent client satisfaction survey, conducted in June, 92.2 per cent of producers surveyed positively rated their experience with the Alberta Ag-Info Centre. Of those, 34.2 per cent rated their experience as outstanding. The speed, knowledge, courtesy and usefulness of the staff were also rated very favourably.

The Centre began taking calls in April 2002 and is staffed by crop, beef, forage and business development specialists and agriculture resource agents. Employees all have in-depth knowledge of the Alberta agriculture industry. The resource agents were recruited from the department's offices across the province and have years of agriculture experience to back them up. The specialists are all agrologists, many with graduate degrees and all with extensive practical experience.

"These professionals know their stuff and are able to share their knowledge with producers. I'm proud to tell producers across the province that this service is available for them," adds McClellan. "All sectors of the agriculture industry are incredibly complex, but when producers need advice, it's there for them."

The Alberta Ag-Info Centre operates from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday and can be reached by calling 1-866-882-7677. In addition to the Alberta Ag-Info Centre, Alberta producers and processors can access web-based information on the Alberta Agriculture web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca.

Contact: *Jim Proctor*
Chair, Program Information Services
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 916-8399

Terry Willock
Communications Director
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-7683

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

Alberta invests $15 million in livestock disease and food safety surveillance, lab facilities

Albertans can be assured of having the best animal disease and food safety surveillance systems in the world, thanks to a new livestock testing facility, enhanced surveillance programs and improvements to existing lab facilities.

These improvements, announced on August 15, 2003 by Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, are already in the process of being implemented.

"We know that Albertans and our international trading partners must be confident in our testing and surveillance systems," says MCClellan. "Let me be clear – these changes are about more than BSE – they're about ensuring that Alberta has cutting-edge expertise and facilities to deal with emerging animal disease and food safety challenges."

The enhancements to surveillance, that include cross-training staff to deal with surges, hiring two more veterinary pathologists and increasing efficiencies in lab procedures, will give Alberta Agriculture the capacity to deal with surges in sample numbers for testing, and ensure appropriate turnaround time for Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE) tests. As well, improvements to the already existing lab facilities will make it easier for Alberta to support the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's enhanced surveillance initiatives.

The enhancements to existing lab facilities will increase the capability of the lab to diagnose and test the presence of livestock diseases, while increasing worker safety. The new laboratory will be in a level III bio-security building, a significant improvement over Alberta Agriculture's existing facilities. It will enhance the ability for Alberta Agriculture staff to respond quickly when required to mitigate and control the damage caused by animal disease outbreaks.

The enhancements to the existing facilities and the new lab will cost approximately $10 million. The enhancements to surveillance are expected to cost $5 million.

Contact: *Dr. Cornelia Kreplin* *Terry Willock*
Director, Food Safety Division
Communications Director
Alberta Agriculture *Alberta Agriculture*
(780) 427-6159 *(780) 422-768330*

Fall management of alfalfa stands

Most producers are aware that there is a critical period when alfalfa should not be cut. Cutting alfalfa four to six weeks prior to the first killing frost (when temperatures drop to around -5 °C or 23 °F) is one factor that can increase the risk of winter injury in alfalfa stands. If alfalfa is cut during this time, it requires at least 25 centimetres (10 inches) of re-growth or needs to reach the bud stage to put down sufficient amounts of root reserves to successfully over-winter.

"Proper cutting is only one of a number of factors linked to winter survival rates of alfalfa," says Juanita Kopp, PhD, forage/beef specialist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Alberta Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "Factors that can be controlled by producers include, alfalfa variety, soil fertility, soil pH, cutting schedule, stand age and cutting height. However, there are uncontrollable factors, such as the amount of snow cover, temperature and soil moisture levels, that also play a part in the health of alfalfa stands."

Fifteen centimetres (six inches) or more of snow will protect alfalfa from severe cold. High soil moisture in the fall retards plant dormancy or the hardening off period, and that can lead to winter injury. Dormancy refers to a number of developmental and physiological changes that occur in response to decreasing day length, reduced air temperatures and drier soils.

"Select alfalfa varieties that have a good winter hardiness rating and are resistant to crown and root diseases," adds Kopp. "These varieties are less likely to suffer winter injury. Soil fertility is very important in maintaining productive alfalfa stands. Phosphorous is needed for good root development and vigorous spring growth. Potassium (K) is vital for developing plants and will help promote good winter survival. Low soil K hinders the root storage of carbohydrates and reduces the plant's ability to get ready for winter. Alfalfa grows best when the soil pH is between 6.5 and 7.5. If the pH is less than 6.0, there is a greater risk of alfalfa winterkill."

There is a higher potential for winter injury when a fall cut is taken on older stands of alfalfa (three years of age or greater) and on alfalfa that has been cut several times. If the interval from the last cut is less than 35 days, avoid harvesting during the critical fall period. It is best to enter the winter with a high level of stored carbohydrates (sugars and starches). These energy reserves stored in the roots and crowns of alfalfa plants are important for winter survival and for fast re-growth in the spring.

"Younger stands survive better than older stands because they have lower disease infestation and have less physical damage," says Kopp. "To limit the risk of winter injury, stubble height is also important. At least 15 centimetres (six inches) of residue should be left and uncut strips can act as a snow catch. If an alfalfa stand was cut last year during the fall critical period, it is not recommended to cut it this year during the same time frame."

Alfalfa stands can be grazed after a killing frost, but the bloat potential can be very high right after the frost until the plants dry down. When the alfalfa plant freezes, the cell walls burst, releasing the cell contents and this increases the rate of digestion and consequently results in a high bloat risk. Overgrazing the stand at this time will also reduce the longevity of the stand.

If cutting during the critical period, producers should weigh the risk of winter injury and the need for cattle feed. Stand persistence can be reduced if more than one of these winter injury factors is expected.

Contact: Ag-Info Centre
1-866-882-7677

Producer options for farm animal mortality disposal

Producers looking for the best way to dispose of animals that die on the farm have several options. While rendering has been hit hard by the Bovine Spongiform Encephalophy (BSE) crisis, new options are being studied.

Rendering as a means of disposal has been directly affected by the BSE situation. Perceived problems in the way BSE is transmitted has resulted in tight scrutiny of rendering operations.

"Rendering plants themselves are coming under pressure to change their methods of operation," says Wayne Winchell, agriculture engineer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Barrhead. "As a result, some rendering facilities are now charging producers to dispose of animal carcasses. This leaves producers with the choice of either paying the added costs or finding another means of disposal."

Fortunately, other methods of disposal have not been negatively affected by BSE. Besides rendering, disposal options include incineration, burial, natural disposal and composting. Producers looking for information on the disposal options can turn to four recently produced Alberta Agriculture manuals: ***Livestock Mortality Management (Disposal)*** (Agdex #400/29-1); ***Livestock Mortality – Burial Techniques*** (Agdex #400/29-2); ***Poultry Mortality Composting*** (Agdex #450/29-1); and ***Swine Mortality Composting*** (Agdex #440/29-1).

Incineration can completely reduce the volume of the disposal, which is convenient for producers. However, Winchell says high fuel prices have added to the costs of this option. "It's unfortunate that fuel costs currently make incineration a less attractive option," he says.

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On-farm burial provides the most cost-effective method of disposal in months when the ground is not frozen. Proper procedures must be followed. Carcasses must be buried with at least one metre of loose soil or 60 centimetres of compacted soil. "It should be noted that burial is really only a feasible option for small operations," says Winchell.

Natural disposal, though allowed by law, is not a recommended method of disposal because of disease risk issues. Extra precaution must be taken when using this method to ensure adequate distance is provided between mortality sites and areas of potential contamination such as groundwater and neighbouring property.

"Composting is a relatively new option of disposal for producers," adds Winchell. "Currently this method is being used for poultry and swine materials, but new options are being developed for other livestock.

"New research into composting larger carcasses is being done to help answer questions about composting cattle, bison and other larger animals. Indications are that the process is possible and feasible."

Producers can obtain free copies of the disposal manuals from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 or by calling toll free in Canada 1-800-292-5697. Copies can also be obtained from the AgTech Centre, 3000 College Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, T1K 1L6, phone (403) 329-1212 or fax (403) 328-5562. The AgTech Centre is part of Alberta Agriculture's Agricultural Engineering Branch and has a mandate to support agriculture sustainability.

Contact: Wayne Winchell
(780) 674-8254

Rick Atkins
Agricultural Engineering
(403) 329-1212
Fax: (403) 328-5562

Agri-News Briefs

Workshop for lamb producers

A ***Lamb Finishing Workshop*** is being held on September 11, 2003 in Innisfail and on September 14, 2003 in Dawson Creek, B.C. The workshop is part of an on-going program for Alberta sheep producers hosted by the Sheep Extension Network and Sunterra Meats. Space is limited, so early registration is recommended. All participants must pre-register. For further information on this free workshop in Alberta, contact the Alberta Sheep and Wool Commission at (403) 948-8533 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first). For information on the workshop held in Dawson Creek, contact Heinz Kraukoph at (250) 786-0225.

Harvest festival

The Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village is hosting the 3rd annual ***Harvest of the Past & Heritage Food Festival*** on September 14, 2003. The event begins at 10:00 a.m. and continues all day until 6:00 p.m. The Food Festival runs from 11:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. and features Alberta-produced foods such as venison, Alberta ranched elk, a whole bison-on-a-spit, Saskatoon berry and honey treats, traditional Ukrainian foods and many other taste sensations. Celebrity chef Phil Joy will be on site for the festival performing cooking demonstrations. A threshing bee is one of the highlights of the Harvest of the Past. Free pony rides, a petting zoo, games and wagon rides will keep the children entertained and a stage full of musical entertainment will ensure everyone enjoys the day. As an additional feature, the Edmonton Antique Car Club will be showcasing a vintage vehicle display. The Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village is located 25 minutes east of Edmonton on Highway #16. For more information, call (780) 662-3640.

Invasive plants conference

The Eastern Slopes Invasive Plants Council is holding an ***Invasive Plants: Understanding the Threat*** conference at the Coast Plaza Hotel and Conference Centre in Calgary on October 1 to 3, 2003. Speakers from Canada and the U.S. will address topics such as: A Global Perspective on Invasives; Canadian Perspective on Invasives; Alberta Perspective on Invasives; Water Courses and Riparian Areas; Impact of Invasives on Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat; Ecological Approach to Management and Control;Aquatic Invader; and, Future Directions. Early bird registration, prior to September 15, 2003 is $125, after that date registration is $175. Full conference registration includes conference registration and information package, wine & cheese reception, two breakfast buffets, two luncheons and the Thursday evening banquet. Student registration is $60 for early bird, $80 for registration received after the September 15 date, and includes conference registration and information package, wine & cheese reception, two breakfast buffets and two luncheons (student I.D. card required). For further information and to register, contact Kelly Chambers, conference coordinator, in Calgary at (403) 236-1771 or fax (403) 236-0719.

Alberta Sheep Symposium

A variety of speakers will be addressing sheep producers at the ***Alberta Sheep Symposium***, being held at the Red Deer Lodge on November 14 to 16, 2003. During this three-day symposium, topics such as flock health, value chains, adding value to your sheep operation, and developing a relationship with your processor will be discussed. A trade show and an Alberta Lamb banquet are also planned for the event. For further information, contact Maureen Duffy at (403) 948-8534, Airdrie (this number is toll free by dialing 310-0000 first) or the Alberta Sheep Breeders Association at 1-866-967-4337.

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Agri-News

September 8, 2003

Sheep prescription grazing

For the first time in Alberta, sheep are being used to graze under electrical transmission lines in northwestern Alberta. A pilot project, designed to see if the sheep grazing the vegetation along utility rights-of-way is a feasible alternative to the usual spraying and mowing, was undertaken this spring and is well underway.

"From May to October 2003, John Woodburn is in charge of 1,000 ewes and lambs that will graze the vegetation under utility rights-of-way in the area beside MacKenzie Highway #35," says Doug Milligan, head of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's diversified livestock branch, Edmonton. "Recognizing the growth potential for prescription grazing, the Alberta Sheep & Wool Commission has endorsed this project for funding."

The pilot project will help determine whether sheep can safely and reliably graze on remote rights-of-way. Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD), Alberta Transportation and Canada's Department of Fisheries & Oceans are also watching this project with interest. SRD want to know if there will be predation problems when sheep are grazed in isolated forests. Alberta Transportation is interested in project results and may consider grazing along highways, if found to be feasible and if safety concerns are addressed. Fisheries & Oceans Canada is concerned with a possible impact on fish habitat along the grazing site, and will also be reviewing the results of this pilot project.

"This project builds on a vast amount of experience in prescribed grazing," adds Milligan. "Alberta sheep have been used in vegetation control projects since the mid 1980's in British Columbia and in the Whitecourt area. Currently, Alberta grazing contractors take sheep to B.C. to control the vegetation in newly planted forests. If the growth can be managed for the first few years the seedlings have an excellent chance of survival. Sheep have been very effective and shepherding skills have been honed – predation has been almost non-existent, and the sheep come back in excellent condition. As sheep are browsers and prefer leafy shrubs, they have also been used in the south to control leafy spurge and aspen on cattle range. This initiative could create opportunities for sheep producers in the province if it is found that prescription grazing is also an appropriate method of controlling vegetation in remote areas and along utility right-of-ways."

There could be many benefits to this environmentally friendly method of vegetation control. It not only increases the amount of pasture available for sheep but could result in a growth of the sheep industry in northern Alberta.

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John and Audrey Woodburn are the project leaders and have hired shepherds Agnes Thomas and Thomas Schenkel for the duration of the project. Bob Brewer of the Bluebird Valley Ranch in Nanton is acting as the shepherding resource for the project.

The project is funded by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development through the industry managed Diversified Livestock Development Fund, and is sponsored by Atco Electric.

For further information, contact project consultant Gary Christopherson, (780) 338-2000 in Grimshaw, or e-mail cpmg@telus.net.

Contact:	*Gary Christopherson*	*Doug Milligan*
	(780) 338-2000	*(780) 427-2166*

Is your farm equipment dealer licensed?

In Alberta, farm equipment dealers and distributors must be bonded and licensed under the *Farm Implement Act* before operating legally in the province.

"For many years prior to 2000, dealers and distributors required a $25,000 bond," says Dean Lien, Farmers' Advocate for Alberta. "This bonding provided protection for agricultural producers in the event that the dealer or distributor failed to provide appropriate warranty service, honour retail agreement obligations, or could not provide parts for the required 10 year period."

In 2000, a number of Alberta dealers and a distributor closed their doors, some leaving a long trail of unfulfilled financial obligations. The bonds were not sufficient to provide 100 per cent protection to farmers. As a result, some Alberta farmers received only 12 cents on the dollar owing for deposits and trades offered in anticipation of new equipment deliveries. This problem was further compounded by the fact that machinery prices had recently escalated, putting producers at even greater risk if a dealer or distributor failed.

"The Farm Implement Board reviewed this situation and, after consulting with industry stakeholders, recommended an increase in bonding," adds Lien. "As of January 1, 2003, dealers were required to carry $50,000 bonds, and distributors must carry $100,000 bonds."

An increase in bonding is, however, not the only factor that comes into play. The 9/11 tragedy has had far-reaching effects on the insurance industry. It is no longer possible to merely purchase a bond as if it were an insurance policy on a car or a house. Insurance carriers now require financial statements from the bond applicants and, in some cases, require personal guarantees from partners, including silent partners and spouses, prior to issue. The result of these further stipulations is that many farm equipment dealers and distributors are having difficulty fulfilling the insurance industry requirements, but are continuing to operate without benefit of a bond or license.

"It is imperative for producers and farmers to ensure that they are purchasing from a dealer or distributor that is covered by the requisite bond and insurance," says Lien. "Producers need to protect their financial investment and it is up to them to make sure **before** business is conducted that the farm equipment dealer or distributor has a current Alberta Farm Implement License. A copy of this license should be prominently displayed in the dealership showroom."

Please call the Farmers' Advocate office if you have any questions or require further clarification.

Contact:	*Dean Lien*	*Dennis Budney*
	(780) 427-2188	*(780) 427-2188*
	Bernie Yakimyshyn	
	(780) 427-2188	

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

Risk management expert coming to Edmonton

Agricultural risk management isn't just another industry buzz-phrase. Some people wonder how farm risk can be managed, since the risks that impact farm management are usually things such as weather, pests and regulations.

"In an industry where uncertainty is the only constant, risk management is crucial for maintaining long-term stability," says Ted Darling, business risk management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "With an agricultural risk management plan in place, farm businesses are better able to deal with the future."

Several specialists within Alberta Agriculture have been focusing on developing risk management services for Alberta's primary producers. In September 2003, these risk specialists will be in attendance at a seminar led by Dr. Brian Hardaker, one of the leading minds in agricultural risk management in the world. Hardaker has considerable experience with risk management policies in Australia and Europe. His sessions are largely interactive and he encourages discussion rather than lecturing. Those who attend these sessions will be exposed to new ideas, be given the opportunity to share information about their individual projects and hear about lessons learned from around the world.

This discussion-based seminar, being held in Edmonton on September 17, 2003 beginning at 10:00 a.m., will focus on ***The Role of Government in Agricultural Risk Management*** and will cover other topics that appeal to those interested in the concepts of agricultural risk management.

Cont'd on page 3

"The concept of risk management is not new, but it has not been widely practiced among Alberta's agricultural community," says Darling. "Having the opportunity to work with an expert such as Dr. Hardaker can help prepare specialists to better serve Alberta's producers. Currently, many risk specialists are working on tools that primary producers can use to manage risks inherent in their farm businesses."

For more information about agricultural risk management or the sessions with Dr. Hardaker, contact Darling at (403) 948-8524.

Contact: *Ted Darling*
(403) 948-8524

Ag research reports on-line

Soil and water scientists with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development work on many research projects throughout the year. New articles have recently been posted to the Alberta Agriculture web site providing results from two of these projects.

Manure management and composting manure are increasingly important practices. To effectively use manure, producers need to know what fertilizer benefits to expect from the composted material. A three-year test has been completed to measure release rates from composted manure.

Three-Year Phosphorous Release Rates From Composted Manure - follow-up soil samples were taken, in 2002, from a three-year study (1999-2001) of compost as a fertilizer phosphorus source. The objective of this study was to determine the three-year nutrient release rates from composted cattle manure. Soil samples were collected from three fields involved in a potato rotation. One of the fields had received a variety of rates of compost in 1999, one in 2000 and one in 2001. Results indicated that one-, two- and three-year average annual nutrient release rates, in the 0 to 15 cm depth range, for nitrate nitrogen were 5, 1 and 2 per cent; for phosphate phosphorus were 3, 15 and 25 per cent; and, for potassium were 17, 39 and 26 per cent, respectively. Overall, nutrient release rates showed a decline with increasing compost application rates. Nutrient release rates were lower and later than expected, likely due to the colder climate and shorter growing season found in southern Alberta. No changes in organic matter were observable with these single applications of compost. The high degree of variability in soil characteristic (texture, moisture and fertility), combined with the high degree of variability in application rate of compost across a field, make studying the field scale nutrient release rates of compost difficult. More research is highly recommended, in order to determine accurate nutrient release rates, specific to the southern Alberta climate. Long-term plot scale and field scale research is suggested, for a variety of crops, soils and field conditions.

To view the study results, charts and graphs, go to the Alberta Agriculture web site at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca, click on the link to *Soil/Water/Air*, then *Soil Fertility* and then on *Manure*. ***Three-Year Phosphorous Release Rates from Composted Manure*** is posted under that heading

Another research project ***Long Term Viability and Salinity Tolerance of Dryland Forage and Turf Grasses***, was also recently posted to the Alberta Agriculture web site.

This field experiment was designed to determine the salinity tolerance of 20 species of forage and turf grasses. It was established on a farmer's field near Oyen in 1991 by the Soil and Water Agronomy Program, Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. In June 1992, plant samples and salinity readings were collected from four of the species, to determine the yield response to changes in soil salinity. The remaining species were unable to establish due to drought conditions, so the plot was abandoned. In the spring of 2002, the Soil and Water Agronomy Program was notified that the plot was still in existence and that some of the species that had remained dormant in 1991-1992 had now established. Dahurian wild rye was of particular interest as it is purported to have a low rate of persistence, even on soils with low salinity. Plans to collect plant samples in the late summer of 2002 were prevented by a grasshopper infestation and counts of healthy plant clusters were taken instead.

To view the study results, maps, charts and graphs, go to the Alberta Agriculture web site at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca, click on the link to *Crops*, then *Forages & Range* and then on *Crop Management*. ***Long Term Viability and Salinity Tolerance of Dryland Forage and Turf Grasses*** is posted under that heading.

Contact: *Shelley Woods*
Soil and Water Research Scientist
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(403) 362-1352

65 years of DUC conservation efforts

The year 2003 marks 65 years of conservation for Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC). During the year, DUC is paying tribute to the many landowners who have assisted the organization in their activities. Many of Alberta's farmers and ranchers have partnered with DUC on projects ranging from installation of nesting boxes to more extensive conservation work. Landowners play a very large role in these projects that enhance Alberta's landscape for waterfowl and wildlife.

Across Alberta, more than 5,000 landowners have helped DUC conserve, restore and protect some 1, 317,669 acres (533,241 hectares) of lands. These areas have increasingly

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become more critical to the survival of many of the province's waterfowl and wildlife species.

DUC started conserving habitat in 1938. Land use decisions and land management practices influence both the amount and the quality of wildlife habitat in Alberta's diverse ecosystems. DUC's habitat conservation programs help minimize habitat loss, maximize sustainability and reward landowners economically for adopting sustainable and beneficial land use practices.

Good land stewardship and wildlife-friendly practices improve water quality and protect natural diversity in plants and animals.

There are many DUC habitat projects and programs operating in Alberta. The Stony Plain/Cooking Lake Habitat Stewardship Program, that boasts conservation of more than 5,000 acres (2,000 hectares) of native habitat is one of the examples of how landowners working with DUC can conserve, restore and manage wetlands, riparian areas and associated habitats.

For further details on other DUC/landowner projects being celebrated during DUC's 65th anniversary, visit the DUC web site at www.ducks.ca/news/2003/030812.html.

Contact: *Leigh Patterson*
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l_patterson@ducks.ca

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Agri-News Briefs

Hort Congress

The Alberta Horticulture Congress is being held again at the Mayfield Inn and Suites, Edmonton, on November 13 and 14, 2003. Over 50 technical, educational and inspirational workshops, seminars and panel discussions will be presented over the two days. The Hort Congress is specifically designed for greenhouse, landscape, garden centre, market gardening, fruit and herb growing business owners and industry employees. The conference will open each day with a presentation by one of the keynote speakers, Michael Kerr, 2002 Presenter of the Year award winner, and Mark Cullen, renowned author and radio and T.V. personality. The Prairie West Horticultural Show is held in conjunction with the Congress, giving even greater value for attendees. Those who attended last year's Congress will receive a program and registration form in the mail in mid-September. The program and registration form are also available on-line by visiting the Hort Congress web site at www.albertahortcongress.com. Albertans involved in the horticulture industry can be placed on the Hort Congress mailing list by calling toll free 1-877-998-2782 or (780) 998-7586 or by e-mailing Shirley Alton at salton1@telusplanet.net.

Banff Pork Seminar

The Banff Pork Seminar, being held in Banff on January 20 to 23, 2004, is designed for anyone interested in pork production, commercial pork producers, researchers, extension and education specialists and members of agricultural supply and service industries. Participants interested in improving their knowledge and decision-making abilities in pork production will benefit from presentations on the latest information in pork production and technology. The seminar features speakers of international caliber, recognized as authorities in their field. Some of the topics being addressed at the seminar include: challenges for the pork industry, Country of Origin Labeling, living with pig traceability, managing large group grow-finish pigs, and protecting feed quality and safety. For more information or to register, contact Banff Pork Seminar at (780) 492-3651, e-mail info@banffpork.ca or visit the web site at www.banffpork.ca.

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Agri-News

September 15, 2003

Potential for Clubroot in commercial vegetables

Clubroot, a highly destructive fungal disease, has been confirmed in one canola field and reported as potentially present in a number of fields in the Edmonton area. The potential for spread to other fields and crops exists. This disease has been found in isolated vegetable fields in Alberta in the past. Soil conditions where pH is less than 7 increases the susceptibility of Clubroot and the disease is most severe in wet, acidic soils in the pH 5 to 6 range.

"This disease could prove to be a significant detriment to the vegetable and canola industries," says Rob Spencer, irrigated and specialty crop specialist, Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "Commercial growers and market gardeners of cole crops such as cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale, kohlrabi, and growers of rutabaga, turnip and radish need to understand the potential for this disease in their crops, particularly if their soil conditions are suitable for disease development."

Clubroot (*Plasmodiophora brassicae* **Mor.**) is a fungal disease of cruciferous crops (canola, mustard spp., vegetable cole crops [cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, Chinese cabbage, kale, kohlrabi], turnips, rutabaga and radish). Clubroot infects the roots of host plants, resulting in gall formation. Infected plants become stunted due to a restriction in water and nutrient uptake. Older leaves may turn yellow and senesce and younger parts may be slightly blue and may wilt during the day, with possible recovery at night.

"The clubroot pathogen is disseminated in water, contaminated soil or manure, and infected transplants," adds Spencer. "Galls break down and long-lived spores are released. Spores can remain viable for up to 18 years."

Control Measures:

- ensure rigorous sanitation is practiced. Ensure that all equipment and personnel leaving an infected field are free from potentially contaminated soil. Do not remove straw or plant material from an infected field and spread it elsewhere
- minimize soil erosion
- ensure good soil drainage
- maintain a higher soil pH (about 7), with pH adjustments made by liming the soil

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AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- follow a five to seven year rotation between cruciferous crops
- ensure cruciferous weeds are controlled (e.g. wild mustard, stinkweed, shepherds purse, flixweed, volunteer canola, etc.)
- avoid applying contaminated manure (animals fed contaminated cull plants or pastured in infected crops)
- avoid using contaminated irrigation water
- use only healthy transplants for spring planting
- a transplant fungicide application may help to prevent infection

"Growers should monitor their fields for this disease and have suspect plants tested by a plant health laboratory or plant pathologist," says Spencer.

If an infection is suspected, growers should contact the following Alberta Agriculture staff for assistance with sample collection and disease management:

Rob Spencer, Ag-Info Centre, Stettler, 1-866-882-7677

Dr. Ron Howard, plant pathologist, CDC South, Brooks, (403) 362-1328

Dr. Chris Neeser, fruit and vegetable scientist, CDC South, Brooks, (403) 362-1331

Further information and pictures can be found at the following websites

- www.canola.ab.ca
- http://res2.agr.gc.ca/stjean/publication/bulletin/plasmodiophora_brassicae_e.pdf
- http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/crops/facts/85-043.htm

Contact: Rob Spencer
1-866-882-7677

Feed grain and forage opportunities

There are huge opportunities for livestock producers and grain producers to work together and, through innovative business arrangements, grow feed for the livestock industry. The business arrangements around buying and selling feed is the theme of the conference ***Capturing Feed Grain and Forage Opportunities***, being held at the Capri Centre in Red Deer on December 2 and 3, 2003.

"This conference should be of interest to stakeholders in the livestock, grain and forage industries," says Trevor Yurchak, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Athabasca. "Livestock producers can benefit from modern business arrangements by having access to a larger, more consistent supply of feed. Forage and grain producers can benefit from arrangements that will allow them to profitably grow feed for the livestock industry."

One of the conference keynote speakers is Dr. Keith Bolsen, from Kansas State University. Dr. Bolsen will address the topic Reducing Losses Associated with Various Feed and Harvest Systems. This topic will discuss the economics of feed losses in silage and dry harvest systems.

Other topics being addressed at the conference include Silage Agronomy; Annual Crops for Grazing; Adding Feed Crops and Forages to Your Rotation; Animal Nutrition – What it means to the Livestock and Feed Producers; Feed Grain Production; and, Valuing and Selling Your Feed Crops. The topics will be sure to provide valuable information for grain, forage and livestock producers.

This conference is organized by Alberta Agriculture, Western Forage and Beef Group, Alberta Environmental Sustainable Agriculture, Alberta Assoc of Agricultural Fieldmen and Alberta Research and Extension Council of Alberta.

For more information, call (403) 742-7942 or 1-800-387-6030 (toll free in Alberta).

Contact: Trevor Yurchak
(780) 675-8219

Entrepreneur success in rural Alberta

Even though Canada is becoming more urbanized, there are still 6.4 million people living in rural areas and a further 4.6 million living in small cities. Interestingly, there are also more small businesses in rural areas than in urban.

"New businesses are continually being developed," says George Rock, business management specialist – crops/new ventures, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Leduc. "A recent study found that personal savings of $70,000 Cdn or less accounted for seed capital for 74 per cent of new businesses started in the United States. In the U.S. as in Canada, many of these new businesses fail in a relatively short time."

To address this problem, Alberta Agriculture designed its own study to look at success and failure in new business ventures in Alberta and answer two major objectives:

- How can entrepreneurs be helped to improve success rates with new ventures, thereby increasing growth rate within the industry?
- What can be done to make help new ventures begin more effectively and evolve more efficiently?

"Rural development, particularly rural economic development, is important to Alberta Agriculture," adds Rock. "This qualitative study uses the collective skills of a number of staff who have devoted their time and effort over an eight-year

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period to rural development. Interviews were conducted with 14 former Alberta Agriculture rural development specialists, one independent consultant and one consultant with Alberta Economic Development."

The study summarized information under specific headings: production, marketing, finance, human resources and strategic. The study database contains data from 28 successful operations and 18 unsuccessful operations. It is interesting to note that more strategic factors were mentioned for the 28 successful enterprises than any other. Rankings by successful operations, from most important to least important, for these factors are: strategic, marketing, production, human resources and finance. Rankings given by the 18 unsuccessful business enterprises, again listed most important to least important are: strategic, finance, marketing, production and human resources.

For both groups, strategic is the most important factor. In contrast to successful operations, where finance is the least important group of factors, for unsuccessful operations, finance is ranked second out of the five.

"Starting and growing a successful rural business needs networking and personal skills as well as the more traditional business skills," says Rock.. "New entrepreneurs must be enthusiastic about their product(s) and business. Entrepreneurs must recognize that no one person alone, including the entrepreneur, has all the skills needed to develop and operate a new business. Others with complementary skills are needed. They may have an equity position, as a consultant, contracted or hired. Entrepreneurs must passionately believe in what they are doing, but at the same time actively seek expert advice, knowledge and information. Then, they must have the judgment to know when and how to incorporate this advice and knowledge into their new venture."

Having a sound financial plan and adequate financing is also necessary, but not a sufficient condition for success. The most important factor for success is to tap into an existing network, or if one has not been established, to build one.

For a full copy of this research paper, contact the author:

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Contact: George Rock
(780) 986-8992

Farmers' market study tours

Do you grow a huge garden that you share with your friends? Do you raise organic poultry and have room to expand if you only had the customers? Selling or vending at an Alberta Approved Farmers' Market might be the answer. Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Explore Direct Team have coordinated two study tours of Alberta Approved Farmers' Markets this summer, the first was held in St. Albert on August 23, 2003 and the next tour will be in Millarville on September 20, 2003. Both of these markets are considered "destination" markets and have a lot to offer to new and existing vendors as well as market managers.

"St. Albert, sponsored by the St. Albert Chamber of Commerce, is western Canada's largest outdoor market with over 200 vendors," says Eileen Kotowich, project assistant with Alberta Agriculture's Agri-preneur Action Unit. "The study tour began early enough that participants got to see how vendors set-up and how downtown St. Albert transforms from a typical urban setting into one with live music, clowns, face painting, crafts of all kinds, mounds of fresh vegetables, baking and samples of all that wonderful smelling food."

J Wagner, the market manager, welcomed participants and talked to them about some of the intricacies of the market. Alberta Agriculture representatives shared information about the Alberta Approved Farmers' Market program, food safety and showed a short video that includes interviews with four farmers' market managers. Participants then toured the market with a checklist of things to look for.

"After experiencing an hour and a half of the market, participants met back at the library to talk about what they had seen," says Kotowich. "They held a lively discussion on topics such as sampling techniques, signage, displays and the general ambience of the market."

Doug Visser with Riverbend Gardens and Rosemarie Balish of Balish Poultry then joined the group to share their stories about vending at the farmers' markets. The tour ended with a brief overview of the farmers' market survey that was completed in 2002.

Albertans interested in getting started vending at a market, existing vendors who want to see what a large market has to offer, or managers of smaller markets who feel their market can benefit by drawing on some of the techniques used at this destination market, are welcome to register for the Millarville Farmers' Market study tour on September 20, 2003. Millarville is 20 minutes southwest of Calgary off Highway 22.

For further information or to register, contact Kotowich at (780) 853-8223 (dial 310-0000 first for toll-free access) or e-mail eileen.kotowich@gov.ab.ca. The pre-registration deadline is September 17.

Contact: Eileen Kotowich
(780) 853-8223

Winterizing tender roses

When it comes to getting roses ready for winter, remember that actively growing wood is more susceptible to winter damage, so it's best to discourage active growth during late summer. Fertilizer should not have been applied after end of July and when roses were cut in August, they should have been cut with shorter stems so as not to stimulate new soft growth. In September, it's time to reduce watering, but don't let the plants dry out.

After several hard frosts, rose bushes can be prepared for winter. Here are a few suggestions for protecting your roses over the winter months:

- soak the roots to help prevent them from drying out
- head the canes back to 15 to 25 cm tall, this makes putting the insulation materials around the plants easier
- put mouse bait out to help control these destructive rodents
- cover the plants with about 30 cm of insulating material, such as loose peatmoss, dry leaves or garden soil (this material is removed in early May once the danger of severe frost has past)

Most tender climbing rose canes will have to be taken down from their trellis and covered for the winter. Blaze is the exception as it blooms on the current season's growth.

Local garden centres can provide information for gardeners. Also, information on yard, garden, turf, shrub and tree care is included in the Alberta Agriculture publication, ***Alberta Yards and Gardens: What to Grow***. This book contains information to help Albertans successfully grow ornamental trees and shrubs, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Cost of the publication is $15 (plus GST). Copies are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000-113 street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697. Please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping-and-handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted. This publication may also be ordered on-line at https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/app08/pps/order/orderitems.jsp.

Contact: Alberta Agriculture Publications Office
1-800-292-5697

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Agri-News Briefs

Sheep symposium

The 2003 Alberta Sheep Symposium is being held in Red Deer on November 14 to 16, 2003. Several dynamic speakers are scheduled for the symposium, including Dr. Marry Smith from Cornell, New York, who specializes in sheep and goat medicine with an emphasis on flock health and Paul MacInnes who will be making a presentation on how to fit into a marketing system for maximum return and how to develop a long-term business plan for the lab industry. Representatives from Sunterra Farms and the Albert Lamb Council will also be making presentations at the symposium. Early registration, before October 1, 2003, is $75 per person and after that date, registration is $100 per person. For further information, contact the Alberta Sheep Breeders Association toll free at 1-866-967-4337 or the Alberta Sheep & Wool Commission at (403) 948-8533 (for toll free access in Alberta, dial 310-0000).

Alberta Agriculture wins IPAC award

Ropin' Knowledge and Herdin' Cats, a unique knowledge management project within Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, was chosen among more than 90 candidates from federal, provincial and municipal governments across Canada and out of eight finalists, tied with Newfoundland and Labrador's Statistics Agency for the Institute of Public Administration of Canada's (IPAC) bronze award of excellence for innovative management in public service. IPAC is a national non-profit organization in Toronto dedicated to the practice of public administration. ***Ropin' Knowledge and Herdin' Cats*** is a department-wide initiative with components that include a leading-edge electronic public information system through the department's public web site and the Alberta Ag-Info Centre, the department's call centre in Stettler. For further information on Alberta Agriculture programs and services please visit the web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca or call the Alberta Ag Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.

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Agri-News

September 22, 2003

Agriculture Societies scholarship for farm business training

In the fall of 2003, farm managers can look forward to the 4th annual Competitive Advantage Program for Agriculture (CAPA) in Olds. CAPA, a 12-day intensive business course, has already helped farmers identify their unique competitive advantage through the development of skills, tools and processes that enable them to develop and implement a strategic business plan for their farm.

"Two years ago, we initiated a scholarship program with local Agriculture Societies," explains Morley Kjargaard, business management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds. "Agriculture Societies are encouraged to recognize local area farmers for farm business excellence by offering them a scholarship of up to $1,000 towards CAPA course tuition. As part of their annual grant application, Agriculture Societies can claim the scholarship expense back."

Participation by Agriculture Societies in the scholarship program is voluntary. "While a $1,000 scholarship is recommended, the amount each society awards is discretionary," adds Kjargaard. "In previous years, over 50 per cent of the approximately 60 course participants were able to take advantage of the scholarship program."

The more than 290 Agriculture Societies across the province can also inquire about the scholarship and gather information in preparation for incoming questions. Interested Agriculture Societies can search for a local candidate, and local farm managers interested in attending are encouraged to contact their local Agriculture Society about the program.

Barry Mason of Delia received a scholarship from the Delia and District Agriculture Society to attend the CAPA in 2002. "CAPA has given our farm the management knowledge to better understand our financial position. It has helped us develop comprehensive business and strategic plans and ideas to help us put our finances and business plans together. The Human Resource section alone is very valuable for family farms or any business structure. I would recommend CAPA to anyone! I have already put much of it to work," Mason says.

Ledean Skiba also recommends the program. "CAPA gave me insight into some aspects of business that I hadn't considered vital to agriculture. The abundance and quality of information presented was incredible. Along with the course material, the networking opportunities were invaluable. My husband and I

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registered for this program on our own initiative and we feel that even without a scholarship the program is well worth the time, effort and money."

CAPA is offered by Alberta Agriculture in conjunction with Olds College. The 2003 program will be held in three parts at Olds College over 12 days, November 17 to 20, 2003 December 8 to 11, 2003 and January 12 to 15, 2004. Cost of the program is $1,400 for the first participant and $300 for each additional participant from the same farm operation. This cost does not include travel and accommodation.

For more information about CAPA, the scholarship program or to receive a registration package, contact Kjargaard at (403) 556-4316 (dial 310-0000 for toll-free access in Alberta).

Contact: Morley Kjargaard
(403) 556-4316

Clubroot and canola

Clubroot is a serious fungal disease of cruciferous crops that occurs worldwide. This disease is a major problem in commercial cole crops in Quebec, Ontario and B.C. and has been confirmed in one canola field and is suspected in a number of fields in the Edmonton area. While Clubroot occurs mainly on cole crops – broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, radish, rutabaga and turnip, it can also infect black mustard and canola.

"The fungus, *Plasmodiophora brassicae* **Wor.**, causes large galls to form on roots, which then restrict the transport of water and nutrients to aboveground plant parts," explains Murray Hartman, oilseed specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe. "Wilting of plants is a common symptom. Canola seed yield is severely reduced."

The root galls release mobile spores that infect neighboring plants. There is a resting spore stage that is extremely long lived (decades) even in the absence of hosts. The soil borne spores and lack of air borne spores means that soil transport is the main mechanism of disease spread.

Containment strategies:

- sanitation – clean off dirt from all equipment including tires before leaving infected fields. Do not remove straw or bale straw from infected fields. Even shoes should be free of dirt
- minimize soil erosion on infected fields
- do not seed canola on infected fields for five to seven years. Also, the following alternate hosts should not be seeded or transplanted: cole crops, red clover, orchardgrass and strawberries. Volunteer canola, weeds in the mustard family, dock and hoary cress must be controlled in following crops. Post harvest canola regrowth and winter annuals in the mustard family (stinkweed, shepherd's purse, etc.) should be controlled in the early fall
- there is evidence that liming acid fields, those with pH less than 6, to above pH 7 can reduce the disease severity

"Farmers should check their fields and have any suspect plants tested," says Hartman. "Farmers are encouraged to contact Alberta's Ag-Info Centre toll free at 1-866-882-7677 for information or assistance."

Further information and pictures are posted on the following web sites

- www.canola.ab.ca
- http://res2.agr.gc.ca/stjean/publication/bulletin/plasmodiophora_brassicae_e.pdf
- http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/crops/facts/85-043.htm

Contact: Murray Hartman
(403) 782-8024

Capturing market value

Capturing the best market value is the goal of most farmers and farm organizations. There are many ways for farmers and farm organizations to connect with the marketplace to help capture increased market value. Beneficial marketing practices can include production decisions such as variety, marketing choices, adding value or reducing or removing marketing roadblocks.

"An example of production choices for greater value may involve winter wheat," says Gordon Frank, irrigated crop industry development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Brooks. "I believe we are at a turning point where spring wheat acres will decrease and winter wheat acres will increase. This is mainly because new winter wheat varieties have been developed that are much better quality for bread and other high quality wheat-based bakery goods. In addition, these new varieties are agronomically suited to irrigation conditions. They are relatively short, have good disease resistance and will survive most winters if seeded into some cover."

Producers may be interested to know that new varieties such as Radiant, developed by Dr. Bob Graff in Lethbridge, have excellent quality. Radiant and several other varieties are now on a list eligible for the CWB Select Program that pays a premium over the older varieties. As more wheat is produced for this program, the CWB hopes to increase the payment to farmers because they can get more for it domestically and internationally.

"This is a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation because more wheat is needed to develop the market, but it's hard to commit to production until the market and price reward are there," adds Frank. "Irrigation farmers may want to consider growing one of the winter wheat select varieties as part of their rotation."

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Some benefits with growing a winter cereal are:

- it is usually cheaper to grow because it competes so well with weeds
- it can help to reduce weeds and diseases and spread workload
- it is best grown in a minimum or no tillage situation
- delivery opportunities have been excellent, which improves cash flow

"For a winter cereal, the best fit in a rotation is after an early crop such as canola or silage," says Frank. "It could also follow peas, but reduced snow trap may result in increased winterkill."

The year following winter wheat, because it is harvested very early, may be a good year to establish grass, alfalfa for seed or alfalfa for hay. This is usually a very good time to establish a perennial forage crop because the days get shorter and cooler and there are still six weeks or so before a killing frost. That is enough time to get the plants established so they can make it through the winter. Also, with an August establishment, the crop will be ready to produce seed the following summer, as opposed to the normal spring establishment which delays production for a year. Alfalfa and grass seed producers may find this rotation very beneficial. Contact companies for information on the production of new varieties as soon as possible.

Contact: Gordon Frank
(403) 362-1310

Fall yard care

The sound of geese and changes in leaf color means that fall is here again. Spending some time in the yard now can pay big dividends next year.

"The tops of most of the herbaceous perennials can be cut off or left standing with the exception of peonies, iris and lilies where the tops have to be cut back," says Shelley Barkley, information officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "There are pros and cons to whether a gardener leaves the perennial tops for winter. The removal helps to prevent the over-wintering of diseases and insects, while leaving this material can help to hold a snow cover during the winter as well as it can be attractive."

Newly planted perennials benefit from a mulch of clean material such as straw, or dry grass and leaves mixed together. Apply the mulch after the ground has frozen. Mulching early will help prevent the plants from being forced from the ground. Remember to stake to mark the plants that need to be moved and divided early in the spring.

Mulch the strawberry patch when the temperature drops to -7° C and stays there for three or four nights. Water the plants well, then cover with weed free straw or a grass and leaf mixture. Watering lightly after applying the mulch will help hold it in place. A mulch layer that is five centimetres deep after settling will keep the plants safe. Watch for signs of mice during the winter and treat as necessary.

"The wintering of tea roses begins in the summer," adds Barkley. "Stop fertilizing the plants at the end of July, and in August, cut roses with shorter stems. Cut back the water, in September, but never let the plants dry out. After several hard frosts, the winter insulation can be put in place. Water the plants well, head the canes back to 20-25 cm. Put about 30 cm of insulating material such as peatmoss, compost or soil around the canes and the crown, but do not pack the material too tightly."

Cutting back the water to woody plants and perennials in August will aid the plants in preparing for winter. It is important to have a reserve of moisture in the root zone for all plants in the yard to prevent root damaged during the winter. Fill the soil profile with water in mid-October or just before the ground freezes.

"Early fall is a good time for weed control in lawns," says Barkley. "Broad leaf herbicides for lawns applied on a warm day will control dandelions, chickweed and clover. Keep mowing the lawn as long as it continues to grow. To prevent winter damage to the crown of the grass, cut the lawn five to six centimetres long."

Raking the leaves tidies the yard and removes over-wintering sites for many insects and diseases. Dried leaves can be stock piled for adding to next year's compost pile.

Since winter can fade the memories of the summer, make a few notes for next year, what worked, what didn't and what to try for next year.

Local garden centres can provide information for gardeners. Also, information on yard, garden, turf, shrub and tree care is included in the Alberta Agriculture publication, ***Alberta Yards and Gardens: What to Grow***. This book contains information to help Albertans successfully grow ornamental trees and shrubs, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Cost of the publication is $15 (plus GST). Copies are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000-113 street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697. Please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping-and-handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted. To view this publication and an order form visit Alberta Agriculture's web site at http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/publications.

Contact: Alberta Agriculture Publications Office
1-800-292-5697

Autumn needle shed

Shortening days and the cool nights means trees will be changing colour and leaves will be falling to the ground. This loss of leaves is not just something that happens to poplar and lilac but to the evergreens such as spruce, pine, cedar and juniper as well. Evergreens will drop needles that no longer help to sustain the tree and are a draw on the life support system of the tree.

"The foliage on the inside, closest to the trunk, turns yellow or gold, then brown and eventually fall off," says Shelley Barkley, information officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Usually this gradual process goes unnoticed, but sometimes many needles will discolour all at once. This can be very alarming because it looks like the tree is dying. Autumn needle shed is probably the most noticeable in pines."

Pine will hold their needles for three to four years, while spruce and fir will hold their needles longer. Pine needles grow on the branch in bundles or groups of two, three or five. Spruce needles grow singly, while cedars and some junipers have scale-like leaves covering branchlets instead of needles. When pine shed those inner needles, they drop the bundles, spruce drop single needles, (not necessarily the oldest needles) and the other two tree species drop entire branchlets.

Drought, poorly drained soils, transplant shock or spider mites can stress the plant and cause it to drop more needles than normal. Even after a stressful winter, some needles can be dropped in the spring. Evergreens grow at the tips of the branches so once lost, these inner needles will not be replaced. However, as new growth forms at the branch tips the next spring, the area of lost needles will not be noticeable.

Although needle shed is a regular occurrence, keeping evergreens as healthy as possible with good watering practices and insect control can lessen the amount of needles lost. Lastly, remember to water evergreens well at the end of September or in early October. This will help to prevent damage to the root systems during the winter.

Local garden centres can provide information for gardeners. Also, information on yard, garden, turf, shrub and tree care is included in the Alberta Agriculture publication, ***Alberta Yards and Gardens: What to Grow***. This book contains information to help Albertans successfully grow ornamental trees and shrubs, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Cost of the publication is $15 (plus GST). Copies are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000-113 street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697. Please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping-and-handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted. To view this publication and an order form visit Alberta Agriculture's web site at http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/publications.

Contact: *Alberta Agriculture Publications Office*
1-800-292-5697

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Agri-News Briefs

NSWA open house

The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA) is hosting a ***State of the Watershed*** Open House on October 2, 2003 at Millennium Place in Sherwood Park. This is a fun-filled opportunity to learn more about the state of the watershed, and to share ideas and knowledge about managing this water resource. There will be activities for adults and children, including interactive maps, colouring contests, water testing and presentations about local watershed initiatives. Admission is free, refreshments will be served and the doors are open from 2:00 to 9:00 p.m. For more information, please call Sharon Willianen at (780) 496-3474, e-mail Sharon.Willianen@edmonton.ca, or visit the NSWA web site at www.nswa.ab.ca.

Honey producers convention

Convention 2003, on November 3 to 5, 2003, and the Alberta Honey Producers Coop meeting, November 6, 2003, are being held in Edmonton at the Fantasyland Hotel. The convention will provide three days of information, exhibits and the latest research news. Pat Heitkam, who has been keeping bees since 1975 and operates approximately 4,000 hives in California, is the keynote speaker. Heitkam is currently president of the American Beekeeping Federation and has held the position of president of the California Queen Breeders and the California State Beekeepers. Beekeeper profiles of Mighty Peace Honey, and Bastura Apiaries, as well as a Saskatchewan Exchange Beekeeper profile of Tim Wendell round out the agenda. For further information, contact the Alberta Beekeepers Association (780) 489-6949.

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Agri-News

September 29, 2003

Grasshoppers in harvested grain

Due to the large infestation of grasshoppers this past summer, many farmers are finding high numbers of this insect in their harvested grain.

"The problem that most producers are concerned with is how the grasshoppers will affect the moisture levels in the grain," says Lisa Adam, crop intern at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "It takes a very high number of grasshoppers to raise the moisture level of a bushel of grain by even one per cent."

Assuming that grasshoppers are 70 per cent moisture, it is possible to calculate the approximate number that it will take to raise the moisture level of one bushel of grain by one per cent. That number depends on the size of the grasshopper, which varies with species. The range for barley and canola is 300 to 800 grasshoppers per bushel, and in peas and wheat this range is 400 to 1,000 grasshoppers per bushel. Such numbers are not often found in harvesting situations, even in areas of severe infestation.

"Dockage may be more of a problem for producers with high grasshopper numbers than moisture in storage, but the grain can easily be cleaned if high numbers are found," adds Adam.

Producers are also wondering if tillage such as harrowing, discing, cultivating and plowing, will help to control the grasshopper situation next year. Research scientist Dan Johnson with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has done some laboratory work that indicates grasshopper eggs buried three inches deep will still hatch and allow healthy grasshopper development. Even when eggs are buried up to six inches deep, 50 per cent of the grasshoppers can still emerge.

"Environmental conditions play a large part in grasshopper hatching and can influence the numbers of eggs that hatch, whether they are buried or not," says Adam. "Grasshopper eggs are laid in pod structures that contain many eggs cemented together. Tillage will not physically damage or kill the eggs as they are protected by a very tough coating that makes them almost indestructible, but it may break them apart and spread them in the field. With the potential for erosion, tillage is not considered an effective way of controlling grasshoppers."

For further information, contact the Alberta Ag-Info Centre toll free at 1-866-882-7677.

Contact: *Alberta Ag-Info Centre*
1-866-882-7677

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ARC project targets blue-green algae

The Alberta Research Council (ARC) in Vegreville has signed a one-year agreement with Alberta Environment to examine the effects of various water treatment processes on removing blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) and associated toxins from drinking water.

Blooms of blue-green algae are common in Alberta's nutrient-rich ponds, streams and lakes. However, consecutive years of drought in Alberta and many parts of Canada have resulted in higher concentrations of nutrients in surface water supplies, leading to increased growth of cyanobacteria.

Many rural communities depend on small surface sources, such as reservoirs, small water storage ponds and slow-flowing rivers for drinking water. Health Canada has set a new guideline of 0.0015 mg/L for Microcystin-LR when testing the quality of treated water supplied from surface waters. Utility operators must be aware of techniques for removing cyanobacteria and managing the risk of toxins entering their treatment plants. Cyanobacteria in surface water are difficult to treat by municipal water treatment facilities. Some current water treatment processes can rupture cyanobacteria cells, releasing toxins that can be harmful to both humans and livestock. The toxins produced by some species of cyanobacteria can cause liver damage or promote liver cancer.

"Blue-green algae present several challenges to municipal water treatment facilities, including their tendency to clog filters and contribute to taste and odour quality concerns," says Wendell James, research engineer with ARC. "However, the greater concern is the release by cyanobacteria of toxic substances, such as Microcystin-LR.

"Water treatment processes like settling or flotation must be fine-tuned to remove cyanobacteria cells effectively. Some current treatment practices can rupture the cells, releasing harmful toxins. Once released, these toxins are difficult to break down, requiring the use of strong chemical oxidants such as ozone."

ARC scientists will experiment with two common species of cyanobacteria to establish better control strategies for removing cells and associated toxins. The study has two main components:

- optimizing settling and flotation processes for removing cyanobacteria cells
- examining the potential benefits of chemical oxidation and ultraviolet irradiation for removing cells and destroying toxins

James expects to complete the research project on blue-green algae by March 2004.

ARC Inc. develops and commercializes technologies to give clients a competitive advantage. A leader in innovation, ARC provides solutions globally to the energy, life sciences, agriculture, environment, forestry and manufacturing sectors.

Contact: *Wendell James*
(780) 632-8271
E-mail: james@arc.ab.ca

Direct seeding advantage conference

One of the best opportunities to share information with direct seeders and researchers is at ***Direct Seeding Advantage*** being held in Nisku on November 18 and 19, 2003.

"We have great group of speakers on the two-day agenda," says Peter Gamache, team leader, Reduced Tillage LINKAGES (RTL), Edmonton.

- **Brent VanKoughnet** of Agri Skills, Carman, MB, will begin the workshop. Brent will be challenging us to look at on-farm, field scale trials. He will discuss why you should be doing research; what to research; how to do good research; and interpretation and application of data.
- **Dr. Cynthia Grant** with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), Brandon will discuss the effect of urease inhibitors and polymer coated nitrogen on crop emergence, microbial activity, ammonia losses and yield.
- **Dr. Lloyd Dosdall** with Alberta Agriculture and the University of Alberta will relate his research and observations on insects in direct seeding and their control.
- **Murray Green**, former engineer with Alberta Agriculture will relate his experience and observations on direct seeding planting including seed placement and equipment operation with the aim of helping farmers get the most out of their equipment and ultimately give the crop the best start possible.
- **Denise Maurice** with Westco will talk about hard to kill weeds, burndown, sequencing of weed control and making products work better, all in the context of direct seeding.
- **Dr. Reynard Lemke** with AAFC in Swift Current will discuss tillage management practices and the impact they have on carbon sequestration and nitrous oxide emissions. He will look at the impact direct seeding is having on greenhouse gases.
- **Dr. Mark Siemens** with the USDA in Pendleton, Oregon will lead off our second day discussing residue management strategies, residue sizing and performance of hoe-type drills using residue wheels. He is co-inventor of a U.S. patented attachment for hoe-type no-till drills, a device that has been shown to improve seeding performance.
- **Four growers** will round out the program, discussing how winter cereals are helping them create a dynamic and diverse cropping system.

Cont'd on page 3

Attendance is limited to 150 so early registration is advised. For further information and registration, contact one of the RTL agronomists:

- Don Wentz in the south area (403) 381-5845
- Rick Taillieu in the central area (780) 672-1787
- Ron Heller in the north area (780) 853-8262
- Nick Underwood in the Peace area (780) 814-1232

Further information can be obtained on the RTL web site www.reducedtillage.ca.

Contact: *Peter Gamache*
(780) 422-7922

Farm retailing in Alberta

Explore the road less traveled to enjoy food less traveled

On-farm retailing of farm products is on the rise in Alberta. Selling products directly to consumers is not new in other parts of the world, but it is in Alberta.

"On-farm retailing offers an experience the mega-stores can't replicate," says Kerry Engel with the farm direct marketing initiative, Ag-Entrepreneurship division, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Westlock. "We are seeing on-farm retailing increase far beyond bedding plants and produce. Successful farm retailers are building businesses on a combination of plants, produce, foodservice and gifts. Consumers want to connect with farm families and purchase fresh, in-season and locally grown foods. Today's progressive farmers are listening to the consumer and giving them what they want."

- **Linda's Market** – after 20 years in the greenhouse and market garden industry, Linda Christensen took her market garden to the next level when, in 1999, she built her beautiful farm retail outlet outside Smoky Lake. Her signature products are strawberries, cabbage and cucumbers. Linda's Market has a u-pick component, as well as offering bedding plants and pre-picked in-season fruits, vegetables, ice cream and gift items for sale. Each Friday, perogies can also be purchased. Linda's Market is open for business seven days a week from May until Christmas. As a seasonal feature, special gifts are brought in at Christmas time.

  Linda's Market is situated on the picturesque curve at the entrance to the Town of Smoky Lake on the west side of Highway 28. To contact Linda's Market, phone (780) 656-3554.

- **The Rusty Cup** – owner Val Quast has built this business by featuring down-home fare in the heart of rural Alberta. Soup, sandwiches, very sticky cinnamon buns and other home baking, such as Saskatoon, pumpkin, apple and lemon meringue pies, are staples at the Rusty Cup. The business is also the area's exclusive retailer for MacKay's Ice Cream and features a selection gifts by local artisans The Rusty Cup is open Wednesday to Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and there is also meeting space available for bus tours and parties.

  The Rusty Cup is located 12 km west of Westlock on Highway 18, turn South on Highway 777 for 10 km. Turn east on highway 654 for 1 km. To contact the Rusty Cup call (780) 349-7121.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4466
Cell: (780) 349-9017

Some bulbs you dig up – others you plant

Fall it is just around the corner. It will soon be time to dig and store the gladiolus, dahlias and begonias. These plants can provide years of enjoyment if they are handled properly in the fall.

"Dig gladiolus corms after the green leaves have changed color, this ensures the corms are mature," says Shelley Barkley, information officer at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "Dig and lay out the corms on the ground in the sun for an afternoon. Cut the tops back to about 5 cm (2 inches) above the corm and store warm and dry (25 to 30°C). After two to three weeks, break the old corm off the new one, this should be fairly easy. Remove any soil left on the corms, dust with a bulb dust and store in shallow trays, paper bags or onion bags. Storing at a 4°C will help to control thrips. Acidanthera produce a white or purple flowers with dark centres, are related to and are treated the same way as gladiolus."

After a killing frost, cut dahlia tops back leaving 10 cm (4 inches) of stem above the soil. Wait as long as possible before digging up the tubers – the longer they stay in the ground, the less time you will have to store them. Dig before a really hard freeze that can injure the tubers in the soil. After lifting, turn the clumps upside down to let the water drain from the stems. Carefully remove the soil from around the roots. Roots broken from the basal stem (crown) cannot be saved for replanting next year. Dust the tubers with bulb dust and store in slightly moistened vermiculite at 4°C until April. Check them once in a while to make sure they are not too dry, if they are sprinkle the vermiculite with water. The trick to successfully storing the tubers is to keep them damp enough not to shrivel, but dry enough not to sprout. Another way to store the tubers is to dig them up and leave the garden soil intact around the roots. When this soil begins to dry and crack, sprinkle with water; store at 4°C. This works best in clay loam soils that do not fall apart when they get dry.

Cont'd on page 4

"Dig begonias after the first frost, leaving as much soil on as possible and keep the tops intact. Store for three weeks until the tops are easily broken off," adds Barkley. "Clean tubers, dust with a bulb dust and pack in slightly moistened peat moss or vermiculite. Store the tubers at 4 to 10°C until March or April when they can be started again."

Cut Canna tops off to the ground after frost has damaged them. Dig the tubers and turn them upside down for a few hours to dry. Gather up the tubers and lay them out in an airy room to cure for several days. Pack into boxes of slightly moistened sand or vermiculite to prevent the tubers from drying and shrinking. Store at a cool temperature, remember to check for drying and sprinkle the sand if necessary.

"In order to raise the most beautiful flowers, buy bulbs from a reliable dealer," says Barkley. "Select bulbs for their size and firmness. Avoid bulbs with deep cuts, blemishes, or soft spots. The paper covering or tunic does not need to be intact on the bulb surface. If these are loose, the bulb surface can easily be looked at for marring on the surface. Bulbs store energy, this energy makes the flower. So the larger the bulb – the larger and more flowers the plant will produce. Bulbs for naturalizing do not have to be the biggest. Store bulbs prior to planting in paper or open plastic bags in a cool place such as the refrigerator."

Any location in the yard is suitable for bulb growing. Open and sunny the best, but a little shade in the afternoon will increase the flowering period. Foundation plantings on the south and west sides can cause the forcing of bulb growth. Select later maturing bulbs for these locations. Bulbs can be used successfully in ribbon plantings along sidewalks, as accents in front of shrubs, rock gardens, and in naturalized plantings. Combine in odd numbered masses, to avoid straight soldier rows and plant later-flowering bulbs with early-flowering plants in the same spaces. This will give the area colour all spring long.

Most bulbs hate 'wet feet' and prefer a well-drained soil. The addition of peat moss, compost or humus will improve the water-holding ability of sandy soil and the drainage of clay soil. Dig the bed to a depth or 25 to 30 cm (10 to 12 inches) and incorporate bone meal or 11-52-0 fertilizer.

Plant bulbs in the early fall to allow root establishment. Daffodil bulbs require at least 10 days to set roots, so plant them at the end of August or early September. Mulching late-planted bulbs before the ground freezes may buy some root establishment time. Mulching to a depth of 5 cm (2 in) after the ground has frozen 5 cm (2 in) deep prevents the frost heaving of bulbs. Plant the bulbs 5 cm (2 in) deeper than the recommended depth, this allows for the planting of annuals over top of the bulbs. Space large tulips 12 to 15 cm (5 to 6 inches) apart, and species tulips closer together. Dust the bulbs with a bulb dust to prevent disease and insect problems. Place the flat side of the bulb down, nose up, cover with soil and firm the soil. After planting, water the bed deeply. Bulbs left in place from year to year also need to be well watered in the fall, this allows good root establishment.

Once the plants poke through the ground in the spring remove the mulch, and check the soil moisture levels. Dry soil will cause the blossoms to blast (fail to open). Bulbs need regular watering during the growing season, right up until the foliage starts to yellow, then gradually reduce the water until the leaves die.

After the flowers fade, cut them off with a sharp knife or scissors. Leave the stems with the foliage until the plant naturally dies back. Fertilize at the end of flowering with 10-30-10 or bulb fertilizer, this increases the food storage of the bulbs. Bulbs can be left in place for three to five years. Bulbs used for naturalizing will need to be lifted when their blossoms get fewer and fewer in number.

To increase the number of bulbs, rearrange the planting or rejuvenate a crowded planting, lift and replant the planting. Bulbs can be lifted anytime after the foliage dies and falls over. They can be replanted immediately, or air-dried and stored in a warm well-ventilated room. The plants can also be dug once flowering is finished and placed in a nursery area (heeled in). The foliage is left to mature, then dug, cleaned and stored.

Local garden centres can provide information for gardeners. Also, information on yard, garden, turf, shrub and tree care is included in the Alberta Agriculture publication, ***Alberta Yards and Gardens: What to Grow***. This book contains information to help Albertans successfully grow ornamental trees and shrubs, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Cost of the publication is $15 (plus GST). Copies are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000-113 street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697. Please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping-and-handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted. To view this publication and an order form visit Alberta Agriculture's web site at http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/publications.

Contact: Alberta Agriculture Publications Office
1-800-292-5697

Agri-News Briefs

Bentley Lecture in Sustainable Agriculture

This year, the University of Alberta has initiated the First Annual Bentley Lecture in Sustainable Agriculture. The lecture will be held in room #1-001 of the Engineering Teaching Learning Complex (ETLC) on campus at the UofA, and is scheduled for October 1, 2003, at 4:00 p.m., reception to follow. Dr. Vaclav Smil, distinguished professor at the University of Manitoba and Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (Science Academy), will present a lecture entitled ***Feeding Ten Billion: Is Agriculture Up to the Challenge?*** This is an initiative associated with the Chair of Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Alberta, Dr. Les Fuller. The Bentley Lecture is free and open to the public. Advance registration can be made by e-mailing judy.jacobs@ualberta.ca. For further information visit: http://www.rr.ualberta.ca/Seminars_lectures/Bentley_Lecture speaker.asp

2003 GALA awards

Growing Alberta announced the 2003 Growing Alberta Leadership Award (GALA) winners at an industry luncheon event on September 17, 2003 at the NAIT Dining Room, Edmonton. The awards were presented to Alberta agriculture and food industry leaders in five categories including: Food Safety, Environmental Stewardship, Innovation, Economic Development, Community Spirit, and Building Youth Leadership. GALAs were presented to: **The Joint Venture Group** for Food Safety; **Mountain Meadows Food Processing Ltd.** for Innovation; **Alberta 4-H** for Building Youth Leadership; **Edmonton Northlands Park** for Environmental Stewardship; **Colleen Cyr** for Community Spirit; and **Prairie Harvest Canada Ltd.** for Economic Development. GALA winners represent Alberta agriculture and food industry and government leaders in their respective categories. All winners are nominated and judged by industry and government peers. Winners are selected for outstanding commitment, proven leadership and professional integrity. For further information, contact Lynn Haley, media relations, Growing Alberta, Calgary (403) 287-1094 or e-mail: lhaley@westarcsl.com.

CAMA seminar to focus on solutions for agricultural marketers

The Canadian Agri-Marketing Association (CAMA) seminar, being held November 7, 2003 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Calgary, will feature some of Canada's leading thinking in the marketing and agricultural sectors. The half-day seminar features speakers Bill Lamberton, vice president of marketing and sales for WestJet Airlines; Ted Haney, president of the Canadian Beef Export Federation; Allan Quarry, president of Quarry Integrated Communications; Roger Mercier, president of Street Smart Strategic Planning Inc.; and Ken Wong, professor of marketing, Queen's University. In addition, Jeffrey Simpson, columnist for the Globe and Mail, will speak on the upcoming Liberal leadership change and what that may mean for Western Canada and the agriculture industry. For further information or to register on-line for this seminar go to the CAMA web site at www.bestofcama.com/seminar/about_seminar.shtml or call Connie Pruden at the CAMA Alberta Chapter office at (403) 244-4487. Early registration rates will be in effect until September 30, 2003. CAMA is a not for profit organization comprised of members with an interest in agricultural marketing.

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Agri-News

October 6, 2003

Free pesticide disposal for Alberta farmers

Operation CleanFarm, a pesticide collection program that offers farmers the opportunity to dispose of old crop protection products at no cost, will take place on October 21 to 23, 2003 in central Alberta.

Old pesticides such as herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and rodenticides can be dropped off at 35 collections sites being set up throughout central Alberta.

"Operation CleanFarm is an excellent opportunity for farmers to properly dispose of old pesticide products," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Our Alberta farmers take environmental stewardship seriously, and I know our producers appreciate the help this program offers. I commend all the agriculture industry organizers and volunteers at the collection stations throughout central Alberta, who are helping to make all of this possible."

In 2002, phase one of Operation CleanFarm, a three-year stewardship program initiated by CropLife Canada, was launched in the Peace River region and collected almost 22 tonnes of old pesticides. The final phase, to be launched in 2004, will target southern Alberta.

The initiative is part of a Canada-wide obsolete-pesticide collection and disposal program that was first introduced in 1998. To date, over 500 metric tonnes of obsolete agricultural pesticides have been collected coast to coast through programs in Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta. A program is also under development in Manitoba.

"Ultimately, we all have the same goal – to protect Alberta's environment," says Environment Minister Lorne Taylor. "This program is an excellent example of how industry, governments and communities can work together to achieve that goal."

Central Alberta collection sites include:

Athabasca	UFA
Barrhead	AgricoreUnited
Bashaw	AgricoreUnited
Bonnyville	AgricoreUnited
Camrose	UFA
Coronation	AgricoreUnited
Daysland	Crowfoot Agri Supplies

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Morinville	McEwen's Petroleum
Paradise Valley	AgricoreUnited
Ponoka	Ponoka Fertilizer
Provost	UFA
Red Deer	UFA
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Vegreville	Cargill
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More information and the collection site list are available on-line at www.gov.ab.ca/env/protenf/pesticide/cleanfarm or by calling Alberta Agriculture's Ag-Info Centre toll free at 1-866-882-7677.

Contact: Tim Morrison
(780) 427-1693

Alberta Ag-Info Centre
1-866-882-7677

The changing alfalfa seed markets

The current slow market for alfalfa seed has been frustrating for producers. However, there is some encouraging news for producers regarding the Chinese market for forage seed and the decrease in North American acres. The changes should encourage Albertans to pursue these markets aggressively and not give up on production.

"China has opened its borders to international trade and is attempting to become more self-sufficient in agriculture," says David Wong, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's forage seed market analyst, Grande Prairie. "Markets for forage seed have greatly expanded because of increasing beef and dairy production; beautifying the nation in the eyes of the world for the 2008 Beijing Olympics; and, reclaiming severely eroded lands, especially in the Inner Mongolia region."

"The majority of seed exports from Canada to China consist of alfalfa seed," adds Gordon Frank, irrigated crop industry development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Brooks. "Current relatively low prices have dramatically increased alfalfa seed exports to China. In 1999, only 9,000 kg of alfalfa seed was exported to China. However, 2000 saw a large jump to over 378,000 kg. In 2001, Canadian alfalfa seed sales jumped to just under one million kg, surpassing the U.S. as the number one supplier of alfalfa seed to China."

The year 2002 saw another huge jump in Canadian sales of alfalfa seed with over 5.1 million kg landing in China. Export data indicates that the alfalfa shipments from Canada are split 52 per cent and 48 per cent between common and certified seed, respectively. Of the total forage seed exports to China by Canada, 94 per cent of the trade involved alfalfa.

"China has become a major forage seed market for Canada," says Frank. "It isn't just price that is influencing the increased exports. The tremendous strides into this marketplace are also partly because similar climates make Alberta varieties perform well there. Alberta's superior varieties and quality should also mean a premium price, and with the proper product, expertise and know-how we can continue to make substantial in-roads."

There is cause for optimism that prices will increase. Last year, western U.S. had only 69,000 acres of alfalfa seed compared to 196,000 acres in 1999. Acres have declined in Canada as well, but not as dramatically. The steady decline in acres will turn the market around. The 10-year alfalfa seed price cycle seems ready to turn around from both a fundamental and technical point of view.

As China grows as a nation and economic power, its need for forage seed, not only for beautification, but for reclamation of it's depleted grasslands and development of its dairy and beef industry, will continue to grow. Forage seed will continue to be consumed as forage seed planting continues.

"Dealing in China takes considerable experience," says Frank. "There are companies who are gaining the ability to access this market. Aligning yourself with a reputable North American seed dealer is almost essential to success. You may also wish to use the Export Development Corporation for advice and insurance protection for your exported seed."

Contact: Gordon Frank
(403) 362-1310
E-mail: gordon.frank@gov.ab.ca

BSE program targets young bison, veal, sheep, goat, elk and deer

Alberta's bison, veal, sheep, goat, elk and deer producers now have access to Alberta government financial assistance as part of the government's commitment to these industries.

"All of our livestock industries face the same difficult challenges – low market prices and very restricted markets," said Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Through our previous programs, we met our commitment to the cattle and beef industry by covering the thousands of slaughter cattle affected by the May 20 border closure and this program will help to cover the remaining slaughter ruminant inventories that were not covered under the Canada-Alberta BSE Recovery Program."

McClellan said this transition program fully meets Alberta's commitment to developing a transition period for the other ruminant livestock industries.

The Alberta BSE Slaughter Market Adjustment Program for Other Ruminants is very similar to the Canada-Alberta BSE Recovery Program, which ran from June 18 to August 31. Producers who sell their animals for slaughter are entitled to compensation on a sliding scale equal to the difference between a base price and an average weekly market price. The program is retroactive for animals slaughtered after August 31.

There is no set-aside component as in some of the previous compensation packages. The program will be under continual review and payment caps on a per animal basis may be applied to ensure support is available over a reasonable time period.

For application forms and more information about this program, please visit Alberta Agriculture's web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca, or call Alberta Agriculture's Rural Services Division at (780) 422-9167.

Contact: *John Knapp*
Director, Rural Services Division
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 415-9755

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

Are waterfowl dining on your crop?

There's nothing more frustrating than dodging all the risks in a crop year, only to have migratory waterfowl find the prized crop a culinary delight.

"Don't despair, help is just a phone call away," says Velma Hudson, provincial coordinator with Alberta Conservation Association's (ACA) Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program (WCDPP). "WCDPP is designed to reduce the amount of damage done to cereal crops by waterfowl during the fall migration period and is jointly planned by ACA, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) and Environment Canada (CWS).

"There are many tools available to farmers – from the good old-fashioned scarecrow to setting up alternate feeding sites – that will decrease the damage to standing or swathed fall crops."

The first line of defense has been used in farmers' fields for decades – setting up a scarecrow, or better yet, a colony of them. And, farmers needn't work too hard on making their scarecrow life-like.

"Farmers don't have to give up their favorite pair of coveralls," Hudson laughs. "A plastic bag stapled to a single, upright stick has proven to be very effective because it flaps in the wind. The scarecrow provides the biggest bang for the buck because it is the easiest and cheapest thing to do."

Another simple scarecrow strategy involves placing two sticks in a crossbar formation, much like the old scarecrow method, but simply hanging an old tire on the crossbar. The more of these you have, the better it is, she notes. Moving the tire around from stick to stick increases the effectiveness through the element of surprise because birds hate change.

"If scarecrows alone aren't doing the trick, the next suggestion is to bring in the cannons – literally," adds Hudson. "Propane-powered scare cannons are designed to make a sound like a shotgun. The WCDPP provides scare cannons to grain producers, free of charge, in one of two ways. In areas with a history of severe waterfowl crop damage, ACA staff set out and maintains cannons for farmers who have waterfowl problems. In all other areas, ACA has developed a network of scare cannon distributors. Producers experiencing waterfowl problems can go to a contracted local business, ACA or ASRD office and borrow scare cannons free of charge. Producers provide the propane and maintenance for the cannons."

Another effective deterrent is hunting. During hunting season, waterfowl hunters can be an asset to farmers who have waterfowl feeding in their fields. ACA staff try to put hunters in touch with farmers who want to use hunting as a damage prevention measure.

In areas where waterfowl traffic numbers are in the tens-of-thousands, a final tactic is to set up feeding stations that lure waterfowl away from cereal crops. In this case, the WCDPP buys feed barley and spreads it along the shore of a body of water to provide an alternate source of food for migrating waterfowl.

"Feeding stations are only used in specific circumstances where suitable water bodies exist, and where there is a really large gathering of several thousand birds," says Hudson. "This is a more expensive deterrent because of the cost of feed and

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the manpower to set up the station. Also, this method must be used very selectively because providing a ready source of feed can artificially inflate the waterfowl population."

Farmers should take action as soon as waterfowl are noticed feeding in a field before they have time to set up a feeding pattern. While using any of these techniques will help reduce waterfowl damage to a crop, using them in combination really bumps up the results.

"Scarecrows plus cannons can double the effectiveness. Adding hunters improves results further," says Hudson. "The more tools used, the faster the problem will be solved."

Hudson talks from experience. She's spent about 25 years working with the WCDPP, in the field and now as program coordinator. She says that while it's hard to predict what will happen in a given year, the biggest factors affecting waterfowl damage are weather and how the harvest is progressing. An early harvest, swathed and collected in a timely fashion, means much of the crop is off the fields before the birds fly.

"Overall, the trend in requests for help with waterfowl damage is going down, although we certainly have good and bad years," Hudson says. "New technology, with early-maturing crops, getting crops off the field earlier and straight combining, has helped. Another positive item is the on-farm grain dryer, which more farms now have."

Many farmers really value waterfowl and try to take a cooperative view of sharing the land. Providing grain producers with help when they experience waterfowl problems helps to maintain this positive attitude towards waterfowl.

Funding for the WCDPP program is provided equally by ACA and CWS. ACA delivers the program to grain farmers throughout Alberta. In addition to damage control, the WCDPP plays an important role in acceptance of major waterfowl habitat initiatives like the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP).

Farmers having waterfowl problems should contact their local ASRD (Fish and Wildlife) or ACA office. The ACA is a non-profit, non-government association working collaboratively since 1997 to conserve and enhance Alberta's wildlife, fish and habitat. For more information on ACA visit www.ab-conservation.com. ACA office locations can be found on the web site (click on "Contact Us"), and ASRD office locations can be found at the same web site under "Links>Government".

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Get the competitive advantage

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Olds College are offering the fourth annual Competitive Advantage Program for Agriculture (CAPA) this fall and winter.

CAPA is a comprehensive, advanced management program with a strong emphasis on outcomes and practical application. "The basis of the whole CAPA program is to provide some of the whole farm strategic planning skills," says Dann Mattson, financial management specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds. "These skills will help participants develop a competitive advantage for their operation to help them survive and prosper.

"The CAPA program is an opportunity for attendees to remove themselves from their operations, giving them a more objective viewpoint. They will also gain skills to help them analyze some of the decisions they are facing and be able to work through a more analytical decision-making process."

The 12-day intensive business course focuses on skills, tools and processes in key marketing, finance management, human resource management and strategic planning areas.

"We try to keep the program focused on current conditions," adds Mattson. "As part of CAPA, participants attend the one-day ***Thinking About Strategies*** speaking series. This year the focus is on supply or value chains."

One of the keynote speakers for the series is Dr. Dave Sparling of Guelph University. Sparling will address global agriculture and the importance and value of joining a supply or value chain. The other keynote speakers will discuss supply or value chains, and the opportunities that are available at home on the farm.

The CAPA program is open to all types of agriculture enterprises. "We provide participants with management skills and tools that are very much appropriate for various types of enterprises," explains Mattson. "During the program, participants have the opportunity to work on case studies in groups. Diversity in the group of participants enhances the value of the program and often strengthens their strategic management decision-making. Past participants have also commented that the vast array of experiences others bring creates an informal sounding board that makes it easy to ask questions and seek solutions."

The 2003 CAPA program will be held in three parts at Olds College over 12 days: November 17 to 20, 2003; December 8 to 11, 2003; and, January 12 to 15, 2004. Cost of the program is $1,400 for the first participant and $300 for each additional participant from the same farm operation. This cost does not include travel and accommodation.

For more information about CAPA, the scholarship program, or to receive a registration package, contact Morley Kjargaard at (403) 556-4316 (dial 310-0000 for toll-free access in Alberta).

Contact: *Morley Kjargaard* *(403) 556-4316*

Canadian Sheep Identification Program tags available

The Canadian Sheep Federation has announced that Ketchum Kurl Lock #3 tags are now available for producers to purchase in preparation for the Canadian Sheep Identification Program that begins on January 1, 2004.

"The Canadian Sheep Federation has chosen the metal Ketchum tags for the program primarily because they are the most affordable tags for producers," explained Randy Eros, chair of the national sheep organization. "For easy recognition, we have selected pink as the first tag colour. As the program evolves, more tags may be introduced."

All approved tags must meet requirements for retention, readability and the ability to withstand tampering. Tags will carry a logo featuring a three-quarters maple leaf with the letters "CA" and a nine-digit number between 310,000,000 and 319,999,999.

Producers can purchase tags now from approved dealers. Producers living in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Nova Scotia may only purchase tags through Canadian Cooperative Wool Growers Limited. Tags can be ordered from CCWG by calling toll free 1-800-567-3693 in the Western provinces or 1-800-488-2714 in the Eastern provinces. Provincial check-off fees may apply in these provinces. Producers living in all other provinces may purchase tags from CCWG, other Ketchum dealers or directly from Ketchum Manufacturing by calling (613) 722-3451. Prices will vary depending on where the tags are purchased.

"When tags are purchased, producers will be asked to provide their name, address and phone number," says Susan Hosford, with Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development's business development branch, Camrose. "This information will be entered into the central database maintained by the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) along with the purchased tag numbers. All information will be kept confidential and will only be accessed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in the event of an animal health or food safety concern."

As of January 1, 2004 producers must ensure that an approved Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) ear tag is applied to all sheep and lambs on their premises before the animals leave their farm. This includes animals leaving the premises temporarily (for example: exhibitions, veterinarian clinics, community pastures).

CSIP is an industry-led initiative to develop a trace back system that will address producer concerns about sheep health and meet consumer expectations for quality assurance and food safety. The program is mandatory and will be enforced by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Monetary penalties of $500 or more will be implemented for non-compliance.

For more information contact:

- Canadian Sheep Identification Program – call the Canadian Sheep Federation at 1-613-248-8084 or 1-888-684-7739 or visit the web site at www.cansheep.ca
- Alberta Sheep & Wool Commission at (403) 948-8533 (dial 310-0000 for toll free access in Alberta) or visit the web site at www.absheep.com

Contact: *Susan Hosford*
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Agri-News Briefs

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FarmTech 2004 conference

Alberta's premier crop production and farm management conference will be held in Edmonton at the Mayfield Inn on January 28 to 30, 2004. The theme of the 2004 conference is ***Global Perspectives...Local Knowledge***. The agenda includes international and Canadian speakers who will provide information on the latest in technology, environmental issues, agronomics and farm management. An all-time attendance record was set at FarmTech 2003 with over 1200 delegates, and conference organizers anticipate another sold out conference. ***FarmTech 2004*** is hosted and organized by the FarmTech Foundation of Alberta, a non-profit society whose members are the Alberta Canola Producers, the Alberta Conservation Tillage Society, the Alberta Pulse Growers, Reduced Tillage LINKAGES and the Canadian Wheat Board. For further information, contact Don Bomles, conference chair, (403) 443-7259 or Rick Taillieu, media and promotions coordinator, (780) 679-1787, e-mail rick.taillieu@gov.ab.ca.

Greenhouse gas mitigation web site launched

Farmers and ranchers now have one-stop direct access to greenhouse gas mitigation information on the internet. A partnership between Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESA) Program and Olds College developed and recently launched this independent web site. The agriculture industry is responsible for 10 per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions in Canada, and is expected along with other contributing industries to do their part to reduce emissions. The web site is based on the greenhouse gas workbook called ***Improving Farm Production Efficiency – A Greenhouse Gas Approach***. The workbook provides information about potential sources of greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture operations. It also outlines ways to reduce those emissions while increasing production efficiency and profits. The web site is an additional extension tool, where producers can go to find out breaking news, upcoming events and other information. The site provides information on seminars and courses, publications, news, demonstration farms and links to related organizations. "We're pleased to have the web site up and running, and users can look forward to regular postings of information, news, upcoming events and additional links," says Jilene Sauvé, agricultural air issues specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. Users are encouraged to check for new information on the web site often: www.greenhousegasmitigation.com. For more information, contact Jilene Sauvé jilene.sauve@gov.ab.ca or Dave Patterson dpatterson@admin.oldscollege.ab.ca.

Canadian Summit on the Certified Crop Adviser Program

The Honorable Lyle Vanclief, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Bruce Knight, Chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Natural Resources Conservation Service, are featured speakers at the Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) Program's Canadian Summit. This first-time event, being held in the Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, Ontario on October 9, 2003, is geared toward informing government officials about the program and how CCAs can help Canadian growers add value to agriculture. CCA is a certification program of the American Society of Agronomy (ASA). More than 14,000 crop advisers in Canada and the United States have met the professional standards set by ASA and hold the CCA title. CCAs receive continuing education in nutrient management, soil and water management, crop management and integrated pest management. To become a CCA requires passing international and local examinations, grower references and at least two years of advising experience. Members of Parliament, leaders from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Environment Canada personnel and CCA Board members will attend the meeting. Knight will discuss how the Memorandum of Understanding signed between USDA and CCA has made CCAs eligible to serve as USDA-recognized Technical Service Providers. Canadian producers can call upon their local participating CCAs to help them apply conservation initiatives under the 2002 Farm Bill. The Canadian Fertilizer Institute, the Canadian Association of Ag Retailers, CropLife Canada, the Ontario Agri-business Association, the American Society of Agronomy and the International Certified Crop Adviser Program sponsor the summit. For further information, contact Luther Smith, executive director of CCA (608) 273-8090, Ext. 337, Madison, Wisconsin.

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Agri-News

October 13, 2003

U.S. decision hit and miss for Alberta farmers

U.S. trade commission ruling partial victory for wheat farmers

Alberta farmers received some mixed news on October 3, 2003 as the United States International Trade Commission lifted tariffs on imports of durum wheat, while upholding the 14.15 per cent tariff on spring wheat.

The commission decided unanimously that durum imports caused no injury to U.S. producers; however, the vote on spring wheat was evenly split. A tie vote is regarded as an affirmative vote; therefore, tariffs will be placed on spring wheat imports.

Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Shirley McClellan was pleased with the decision on durum wheat but recognizes the negative economic impact the spring wheat decision will have on Alberta farmers.

"The difficulties of U.S. farmers can't be pinned on western Canada's wheat exports," said McClellan. "While we support marketing choice and the elimination of the Canadian Wheat Board's monopoly in western Canada, these external attacks are unwarranted. Change is needed, but it must be driven from within Canada and by the needs of our farmers."

"Canada durum wheat is in demand, and will continue to be in demand, because it's a premium product," McClellan said. "As for spring wheat, we are disappointed that it is still subject to tariffs and we will certainly continue to support the federal government's fight against this decision."

In addition, Alberta has initiated its own challenge to the U.S.'s final subsidy determination through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The U.S.'s August 29, 2003 final subsidy determination concluded that the way the Canadian, Alberta, and, Saskatchewan governments provide railcars for grain transportation creates a subsidy.

Halvar Jonson, Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations confirmed that Alberta will file an appeal. "Alberta strongly opposes the assertion that the way we provide railcars creates a subsidy for producers and we are committed to proving our position through the NAFTA dispute resolution process," Jonson said. "We expect to work closely with the Canadian and Saskatchewan governments in this regard, since they face similar allegations."

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Historically, approximately 10 to 15 per cent of Canadian wheat exports are destined to U.S. markets. In 2002, exports of wheat to the U.S. were valued at $152 million and $265 million respectively. Alberta's exports of wheat were $98 million in 2002.

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Operation CleanFarm

The 2003 Operation CleanFarm, a pesticide collection program that offers farmers the opportunity to dispose of old crop protection products at no cost, will be held at 35 collections sites across central Alberta on October 21 to 23, 2003.

In 2002, Operation CleanFarm was launched in northern Alberta and northeast British Columbia. Seventeen collection sites were set up throughout the region, making it convenient for farmers to drop off unwanted pesticide products.

Alberta Environment, in cooperation with key government and industry stakeholders, launched a comprehensive media campaign, which included print and radio advertising, and a brochure mail-out to every farm in the collection area.

The partners also worked diligently to develop a feasible collection system and to deal with challenges that included:

- a very narrow collection period to minimize hazardous waste storage periods,
- unpredictable weather conditions that could impact farmer participation and pesticide returns,
- compliance with two sets of provincial hazardous waste regulations and information support systems to accommodate British Columbia and Alberta collection sites.

"Almost 22 tonnes of old pesticides such as herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and rodenticides were collected, exceeding the target by two tonnes," says Tim Morrison with Alberta Environment. "The 2003 phase of Operation CleanFarm targets central Alberta and the final phase, to be launched in 2004, will target southern Alberta."

More information about the 2003 Operation CleanFarm Program can be found on the Alberta Environment Web site at www.gov.ab.ca or by calling Alberta Agriculture's Ag-Info Centre toll free line 1-866-882-7677.

Central Alberta collection sites include:

Athabasca	UFA
Barrhead	AgricoreUnited
Bashaw	AgricoreUnited
Bonnyville	AgricoreUnited
Camrose	UFA
Coronation	AgricoreUnited
Daysland	Crowfoot Agri Supplies
Fort Saskatchewan	UFA
Innisfail	Green Way Farm Supply
Lacombe	Lacombe Fertilizer and Farm Supply
Lamont	Pioneer Grain
Leduc	Ray Agro and Petroleum
Marwayne	Cargill
Mayerthorpe	UFA
Morinville	McEwen's Petroleum
Paradise Valley	AgricoreUnited
Ponoka	Ponoka Fertilizer
Provost	UFA
Red Deer	UFA
Rocky Mountain House	Clearwater County
Ryley	Andrukow Farm Supplies
Sedgwick	DeKoda Agri Business
Smoky Lake	AgricoreUnited
Spruce Grove	UFA
Stettler	UFA
St. Paul	AgricoreUnited
Sunnybrook	Pioneer Grain
Thorhild	Thorhild Co-op
Two Hills	AgricoreUnited
Vegreville	Cargill
Vermilion	UFA
Viking	Andrukow Farm Supplies
Wainwright	Crop-Tech Agro
Westlock	AgricoreUnited
Wetaskiwin	AgricoreUnited

Contact: *Tim Morrison*
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Alberta Ag-Info Centre
1-866-882-7677

New manual available

A unique ***Alfalfa Seed and Leafcutter Bee Production and Marketing Manual*** is now available. The Irrigated Alfalfa Seed Producers Association developed this manual that includes 184 full color pages, more than 250 pictures and detailed illustrations, and a combination of grower experience and scientific information. The growers association brought together writing committees who pooled their knowledge and practical recommendations into a comprehensive guide not available anywhere else. Written from a farmer's perspective, the manual was professionally edited and printed on high quality paper with a coil binding so it is easy to use at home or out in the field.

There is a history chapter telling the story of local entrepreneurs who built the industry. Alfalfa seed was grown around Brooks before 1920. Leafcutter bees were introduced experimentally in 1961 by Dr. Gordon Hobbs of Lethbridge. One year later Bob Asher started using them in the Brooks area. The manual captures much of the expertise learned over the years.

"The 10 main chapters cover most everything needed to seed, grow, harvest and market alfalfa seed and leafcutter bees," says Gordon Frank, agrologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Brooks. "The pros and cons of different establishment methods, thinning and fertilizing are found in the first chapter along with excellent pictures of nutrient deficiency symptoms. In other chapters, there are details on: insect, weed and disease monitoring, when to start incubation of bees, how to delay the hatch and what equipment is needed, shelter designs, nesting materials, irrigation management tailored to a wide variety of situations, how and when to harvest bees, plus a complete guide to economics and marketing."

The manual makes it easy to reference information that was formerly hard to find. Examples include lygus damage units; desiccation timing description and photos; alfalfa weevil thresholds based on stem punctures and egg counts; step-by-step procedure to determine soil texture which is key to irrigation timing; and, a sample calculation of how many nesting material holes are needed per acre.

"The manual, that promotes irrigation in Alberta and in particular southern Alberta, features a section that deals with the advantages of raising alfalfa seed and leafcutter bees," adds Frank. "It points out the reasons why this is a good place for companies to contract seed."

The ***Alfalfa Seed and Leafcutter Bee Production and Marketing Manual*** can be ordered directly from Frank by calling (403) 362-1310. Cost of the manual is $125 plus $10 shipping and handling. Further information on the manual is posted on the Irrigated Alfalfa Seed Producers Association web site at www.iaspamarket.com. Producers can visit the Crop Diversification Centre South to see a copy and the manual will be on display and for sale at the fall growers' meeting on November 13, 2003 at the Heritage Inn, Brooks.

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Charging admission – what's your farm worth?

"Charging admission for special events on the farm is a new concept for many farm direct marketers in Alberta," says Marian Williams, farm direct marketing specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's farm direct marketing initiative, Camrose. "Farm direct marketers and ag-tourism operators throughout North America are finding that charging admission helps make the farm more profitable."

When should you start charging an admission fee to your farm? Many farm direct marketers are including activities or events as a marketing technique to attract more people to the farm. The hope is that when people come to the farm, they will also purchase market garden or farm store products. Adding events and facilities such as a hayride, children's playground area, picnic area, fishing pond, pumpkin carving, scarecrow making or a straw bale maze will make the farm a destination. "Other farms host quilting and scrapbooking retreats, business meetings, weddings, school tours, even strawberry and pumpkin festivals," adds Williams. "As the farm becomes a destination and offers good value and experiences, an admission can be charged. The admission helps increase income to offset the expenses of adding the new activities."

When Mark Saunders of Saunders Farm in Munster, Ontario started including on-farm activities as part of his farm direct business 12 years ago. At that time, they did not charge an admission, but now he is very adamant in advising operators to not be afraid to charge.

What should you charge? Value is the key in determining a price. You need to determine if you are giving enough value for what is being charged and if you are charging enough for the value being provided. Jim and Leslie Forsythe of Forsythe Family Farms in Markham, Ontario say that it's important to give people good value for their money, more than they expect for what they paid. As the Forsythes add events to their farm, they increase their admission price.

Should you charge a general admission fee or fees for individual activities on the farm? The general admission fee seems to work best. A general admission fee means that a minimum number of staff are handling cash. If you charge for each individual activity, there are more points of sale and staff handling cash. This can lead to problems. When the Forsythes

cont'd on page 4

first started charging an admission they charged for the extra individual activities such as tricycle track and Enchanted Forest during their festivals and found that although some people paid and participated, many others didn't. Next they started charging a redeemable admission fee where the customers paid an admission fee and were given the equivalent amount in "farm dollars" to spend that day at the farm. But this was very confusing and time consuming for staff. So they then went with a straight admission fee and it is working very well for the business and the customers. The customers are happy because they are not continually reaching into their pockets to pay extra for activities.

How do you start charging a fee? When you start charging a fee you could get resistance from some customers. If you believe in the value of what you are offering it will just take a little time and some effort as you talk to your customers and explain why you are charging a fee.

Saunders offers these hints on "comfortably" breaking into charging an admission:

- have clear signs at the admission gate showing all of the attractions so the customers see what they are getting for their fee
- give all customers a "site map" of the farm listing all the attractions. This site map can be the same as the sign at the entrance. Look into developing sponsors for the site map as a way of paying for it
- offer two-for-the-price-of-one coupons for admission during the less busy times
- work together with local businesses to offer discount coupons. For example $2 off the price of the admission if you shop at the local grocery store. Distribute the coupons through the grocery store

Both Saunders and Forsythes agree that you get nicer customers. Your customers become more appreciative of what you offer as time progresses because you have placed a value on your farm and they can see the improvements. The web sites for Saunders and the Forsythes are http://www.saundersfarm.com/ and http://www.forsythefamilyfarms.com.

Contact: *Marian Williams*
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Creating a great first, and lasting, impression

"Never go to a doctor whose office plants have died."
– Erma Bombeck

While many people may not think that they make them, first impressions are still lasting impressions. Creating a good first impression is vital when it comes to being a successful farm direct marketer.

"According to Harold Lloyd, of Harold Lloyd & Associates, a food retailing expert from Virginia, there are many things that farm direct marketers can do to improve their customers' first impression," says Kerry Engel, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's farm direct marketing initiative, Westlock.

Lloyd has a specific four-part strategy for ensuring customers get the best first impression:

- be consistent with mission statement and specific strategic plans
- be credible – strive to under-promise and over-deliver
- be compelling – create a desire to return
- be creative; do something for the customer early and/or late in the shopping experience to make them say "wow"

"Lloyd also suggests ten strategies to influence first impressions," adds Engel. "They include cleanliness, freshness, competitiveness, friendliness, best employee, fast checkout, convenient, promotion, variety and community-mindedness."

There are a number of ways to use these strategies:

- have a welcome sign at the entrance and a thank-you sign at the exit
- move displays every day and ensure the floor underneath and around displays is kept clean
- remove out-of-date product
- put fresh flowers near the check-out
- have a box of tissues near the till
- keep name tags visible and in good repair
- avoid clutter
- feature new products with a "New Item" sign for 30 days
- promote the 'home-grown' aspect of the business
- showcase employees with pictures
- let people know what the business does to support the community
- display pictures of employees participating in community events

Cont'd on page 5

"Lloyd's parking sign idea was a real crowd pleaser at the recent North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association conference," says Engel. "Building on the handicapped-parking zone, he suggested having reserved parking signs for other customers. Spots could be reserved for those who like chocolate; drive cool trucks; floss their teeth; or, are wearing yellow. Customers have a smile on their faces before they even get to the door of the business. Keep these signs fresh by introducing a new one every three-to-four months."

As with all marketing strategies, the bottom line for farm direct marketers is to keep customers pumped up and ready to return. Creating the best possible first and lasting impression is a great way to do this.

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Agri-News Briefs

Feed grain and forage opportunities conference

The Western Forage and Beef Group, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Alberta Environmental Sustainable Agriculture, the Alberta Association of Agricultural Fieldmen and Alberta Research and Extension Council are holding a conference on feed grain and forage opportunities. ***Capturing Feed Grain and Forage Opportunities: Growing, Feeding and Selling*** is the theme of a conference being held in Red Deer on December 2 and 3, 2003. Last year's drought reinforced the need of a secure feed supply. The conference will focus on presenting information to help producers find ways to reduce feed costs, diversify feed cropping options, understand the value of a feed crop and create value-chains. The keynote speaker, Dr. Keith Bolsen, Kansas State University, has done extensive work with silage systems. For further information, call toll free in Alberta 1-800-387-6030 or out of province, call (403) 742-7942.

2004 AQHA Youth World Cup Competition

The Canadian Quarter Horse Association (CQHA) is pleased to announce the appointments of Team Canada's Team Coach and Team Manager for the 2004 AQHA Youth World Cup Competition to be held June 26 to July 4, 2004 at Dubbo, Australia. The CQHA Board of Directors appointed. Scott Neuman of Billings, Montana as Team Canada's Coach, and Judy Whittingham of Brandon, Manitoba, as Team Canada's Manager, both of who are well qualified for these positions. Neuman, originally a native of the province of Saskatchewan who holds dual US and Canadian citizenship, has been an accredited AQHA judge for the past seven years. He has judged the Open division at the 2002 AQHA World Championship show, and the 2000 AQHA Youth World Championship shows. Whittingham, secretary/assistant to the Mayor of Brandon, has served with many volunteer horse clubs, groups and other organizations, including seven years as Youth Advisor and member of the Board of Directors of the Manitoba Quarter Horse Association. She has demonstrated fund-raising and organizational skills having supervised two trips of youth, both as spectators and competitors, to attend AQHA Youth World Championship shows in Texas. The CQHA is actively seeking qualified young Canadian citizens who are members-in-good-standing of the American Quarter Horse Youth Association (AQHYA), and the provincial/regional Quarter Horse Association where they reside. Youth who are interested in applying as potential candidates (as riders and/or non-competing members) for the 2004 Youth World Cup Team Canada must apply by December 15, 2003 (postmark). To obtain the team selection criteria and application forms, please access the CQHA's web site at www.cqha.caor contact Whittingham at Box 9, Site 185, RR #1, Brandon, MB R7A 5Y1, or phone (204) 728-9705 (cell phone number (204) 724-7585) or e-mail: j.whittingham@brandon.ca

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Agri-News

October 20, 2003

Storage life of livestock feeds

Grains and roughages have varying shelf lives depending on how they were harvested, processed and stored. "Becoming familiar with how certain processes affect livestock feeds will enable producers to retain quality and palatability from these feeds," says Susan Markus, beef specialist, Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "Being aware of proper storage conditions and recommended shelf life will also help reduce waste when feeding livestock."

"First off, grains and oilseeds vary in fat content which ultimately impacts storage life. If higher-fat-containing oilseeds like canola, flax and sunflower seeds are cracked or rolled they may go rancid if not used up within a reasonable time," she says. "On the other hand, barley, peas and wheat have a relatively low fat level (1.5 per cent) compared to oats (3.5 per cent), which means a longer storage life."

In the summer, high fat processed grains like oats can be stored for up to three weeks in warmer temperatures and up to four months when it is cooler. Because of the high fat content in oats, warmer temperatures can cause the product to go rancid.

Processed low-fat grains (barley, wheat and peas) can be stored for up to three months in the summer and up to six months in the fall and winter. Nutrient quality loss is not significant with the longer storage but the feed becomes less palatable to livestock so they may eat less. As a result, their performance may suffer.

Markus says that the way the feed was processed has a significant effect on its shelf life.

"Rolled or cracked grains have a decreased storage life compared to whole grains. As more surface area is exposed to the elements and changes in temperature and humidity, storage life decreases."

Heat-treated feeds, like pelleted grains or other by-products, will have a longer storage life as the heating process kills some of the bacteria. Expect at least three months and up to six months of storage from any heated pellet. When pelleting feeds, they are broken into smaller pieces and mixed with other ingredients. This dilution effect can help increase storage life by up to double that of a comparable single type of rolled grain.

Tempering or steam rolling (the addition of water or steam) aids in the processing of grains of different sizes and reduces dust. However, since the process increases the moisture content by four to eight per cent, storage times must be less than one to two days to minimize heating and spoilage.

If the moisture content of a mixture of tub-ground feed exceeds 15 per cent it should be fed within a few days to avoid heating

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and digestive upsets, notes Markus. High-moisture grain and silage must be fed within a day or two of leaving their storage facility as these feeds tend to mold quickly if left in feeders.

Anhydrous ammonia treatment on roughages acts as a preservative and helps to prevent overheating as bacteria and molds are destroyed. This treatment not only increases feed quality, it also lengthens the storage life of these high-moisture bales by up to six months.

"Large round hay bales can lose a significant portion of dry matter within the first year. Uncovered forage stacks can lose up to 30 per cent dry matter (DM) whereas covered stacks may lose between 5 and 15 per cent DM," says Markus "How bales are harvested, handled and the amount of rain or moisture they receive can affect optimum storage life. In the case of forage, quality losses (protein and energy content) do occur over time. Vitamins in cut hay can be viable up to 60 days post-harvest; however little remains after that period. This situation is different from silages where the ensiling process renders vitamins inefficient."

Round bale silage should be fed within six months to a year of being harvested. Properly packed and sealed pit silage can be stored for up to two to three years with minimal quality losses. However, initial quality and moisture content at harvest will affect length of storage.

The addition of minerals and vitamins or medicines into feeds also affects storage time. The efficiency of most vitamins and some minerals will be reduced if feeds are stored longer than three months. Markus recommends that producers consult with the manufacturer for storage times on medications added to feeds.

"When it comes to byproducts, handling and storage requires special consideration. Feed byproducts vary in their handling characteristics, feed-out rate and type of storage facility required," notes Markus. "Many byproducts can be obtained in either high-moisture, loose or pelleted forms. Handling characteristics to consider are moisture content and bulk density. Wet byproducts, such as wet corn gluten feed, have a shorter shelf life than dry gluten. Shrink or loss of product over time must also be considered when evaluating high-moisture byproduct usage." As well, she says that liquid byproducts stored in bulk tanks for long periods of time should be mixed on a regular basis to ensure a consistent product.

The bottom line is that the only way to know what quality of feed you are feeding is to submit samples for nutrient analysis. "Understanding and interpreting moisture level, protein, energy and some macro minerals will enable you to develop a suitable ration for your livestock," says Markus. "Feed test in the fall and keep these tips on storage times in mind, so adjustments to the feeding program can be made if necessary."

Contact: Susan Markus
Alberta Ag-Info Centre
1-866-882-7677

Farm direct marketing: an Alberta perspective

While direct marketing seems to be enjoying wide popularity, no one knows just how big the industry has grown or what types of farms participate in these activities. Since direct marketing is hard to define and includes diverse activities, it is hard to measure, so we have little statistical information (Rural Development Perspectives, 12 (2) 1997).

Alberta Agriculture's Farm Direct Marketing Initiative was expanded in 2001 to include a variety of short and long-term actions focused on identifying two key goals: one, the extensiveness of direct marketing in Alberta and, two, planning programs and services that would best meet the needs of Alberta farm direct marketers. These goals are to be accomplished by conducting qualitative and quantitative research.

"A telephone survey was conducted between November 2002 and January 2003 for the purpose of obtaining a snapshot of Alberta farm direct marketers," says Linda Hawk, project leader with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's ag-entrepreneurship division, Medicine Hat. "Specifically, the survey sought to discover a profile of farm direct marketers, types of products sold, marketing channels used and an approximate value of farm direct marketing in Alberta.

"Because it is so difficult to identify farm direct marketers, the findings from the telephone survey cannot be generalized or transferred outside of the survey sample of 299 Alberta farm direct marketers. The results do, however, provide some interesting findings related to the survey respondents and some insight and guidance for future research."

Who are they? Farm direct marketers in the survey sample tended to be first generation producers between the ages of 36 and 55. Most had been selling their products through farm direct marketing channels for two to five years. The motivation for farm direct marketing was direct consumer contact, additional income and enjoyment or recreation. Most farm direct marketing operations are owned by one or two people and have some paid employees.

What do they sell? Products most commonly sold through farm direct marketing channels were fresh produce, value-added products and meat combined with value-added products. Meat was the highest income product followed by produce and value-added products. The high number of respondents reporting meat along with value-added meat products indicates that this commodity is perhaps one of the most established in Alberta's farm direct marketing industry.

How do they sell? The findings indicate that, among the respondents, on-farm direct marketing is most prevalent. On-farm marketing includes channels such as farm stores, stands, U-pick and consumers going to the farm to make their

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purchases. The findings also indicate that although many farm direct marketers offer activities and services, these are not offered as a source of income, but that farm direct marketers often use events to attract customers to their farm in order to sell other products.

What is the Alberta farm direct marketing industry worth? It is very difficult to estimate the value of the farm direct marketing industry in Alberta using only the findings from this survey. The sample was limited, so the results cannot be generalized or transferred, and the income information gathered was not specific enough.

Most respondents reported their gross farm direct income as under $10,000. This finding seemed to confirm that the motivation for farm direct marketing is to provide additional income. With an increased number of years in farm direct marketing, income was reported to increase. It appears that many farm direct marketers are planning to expand, indicating that they are positive about the results they are getting from these marketing channels.

The survey report is available on Alberta Agriculture's web site http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca by following the links *Business and Economics > Ag Entrepreneurship > Farm Direct Marketing*.

To receive a hard copy of the report, contact Pat Oulette at (403) 529-3679, Medicine Hat. Farm direct marketers who would like to participate in future research are asked to provide their name, address, phone number and e-mail address to Lisa Sharp (780) 679-1362, Camrose.

Contact: Linda Hawk
(403) 528-5250

The marketing "pie" for farm direct marketers

Explore Direct is bringing Jane Eckert's Marketing With More Creativity Than Cash workshop to Alberta this December.

Jane Eckert was vice president of marketing for her family's entertainment farm, Eckert's Orchard, and she now works with direct marketers through her own business, Eckert AgriMarketing.

"I attended Jane's workshop, called How to Write a Farm Marketing Plan, at the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing conference this past February," says Kerry Engel, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, farm direct marketing initiative, Westlock. "She shared her template for developing farm marketing plans. It is a step-by-step approach that is thorough and, most of all, practical."

Eckert's five-step farm marketing plan consists of:

- describing your business
- defining your target customers by enterprise
- analyzing your competition by enterprise
- developing marketing strategies
- developing marketing budget

"Eckert uses the image of a pie to describe your marketing strategies. She calls it the marketing pie. She describes the marketing pie as being comprised of promotions, customer communications, publicity, sales techniques and advertising."

"She says that a good-sized piece of your pie should go to publicity," says Engel. "That's because it can be free, and messages delivered by the media are more credible to the public than paid advertising. Eckert says that the media needs you as much as you need them. If you tell them your story, they'll know about you. It's free but it does take time."

In her book, ***Fresh Grown Publicity***, Eckert notes that even if you do not consider yourself to be a good writer, you can get news coverage for your business if you follow some basic steps.

"She acknowledges that most people have never written a news release," says Engel. "And she knows it can be intimidating. Where do you start? Why not approach a local journalism class or hire a free-lance writer. Contact your local newspaper for leads on free-lance writers. If that approach isn't an option, write your news releases yourself."

Jane Eckert's Marketing With More Creativity Than Cash workshop will be held at three Alberta locations: Pincher Creek on December 1, 2003, Olds on December 2 and Leduc on December 3. Early registrants will receive one of the first copies of Jane Eckert's newest book, ***Fresh Grown Promotion***, at no additional cost, courtesy of AVAC Ltd.

For more information on the upcoming workshops or on farm direct marketing, contact Kerry Engel, farm direct marketing initiative, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development at (780) 349-4466.

Contact: Kerry Engel
(780) 349-4466

Senior 4-H members take the LEAP!

From October 3 to 5, 2003, thirty-one senior 4-H members gathered at the Alberta 4-H Centre to take part in the Take the LEAP! (Learn, Educate and Present) program.

The program saw delegates discuss topics such as learning styles, preparing and using audio-visuals, effective speaking techniques and tips to encourage an audience's participation. In addition, delegates chose from one of three topic areas – leadership, record books or parliamentary procedures.

"Delegates will use the skills gained at this program to present workshops to 4-H Clubs," says Janet Kerr, 4-H Specialist,

Cont'd on page 4

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Stettler. "By visiting clubs, these delegates have the opportunity to become more polished speakers while improving other 4-H members' knowledge on various topics."

"I really learned a lot from the program," says Mandy Fisher, a Take the LEAP! participant. "I feel better equipped to give presentations and learned many new things to make my presentations more effective. I would recommend this program to anyone."

Sponsored by Agrium, Olds College, United Farmers of Alberta and Alberta 4-H Program Trust, Take the LEAP! focuses on enhancing skills in the areas of leadership, preparing workshops and working with various groups of people.

Contact: *Janet Kerr*
(403) 742-7547

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Swine technology workshop

The fifth annual swine technology workshop takes place October 28 and 29, 2003, at the Harvest Centre at the Westerner in Red Deer. Topics to be covered include gilt pool management for improved production, loading and transporting pigs and working with pigs in large groups. Cost at the door is $65 per day or $100 for both days. This program is a joint venture among the pork industry, Alberta Pork and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. For more information, contact Shirley Sommert-Ogden at (780) 427-5320 or Michelle Follensbee at (780) 415-0828.

Hydrogen sulphide awareness workshop

Alberta hog producers can learn about the dangers of hydrogen sulphide gas by attending a workshop in Red Deer on October 28, 2003. Shannon LaRoche, on contract through the Prairie Swine Centre Inc. of Saskatoon, Sask., is presenting the four-hour workshop. Participants will learn about the properties of hydrogen sulphide, exposure limits, effects on humans and hogs, detection and safety equipment, critical manure management, rescue strategies and the importance of implementing an emergency response plan. The workshop runs from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and is being held in the Heartland Room at the Harvest Centre at the Westerner. The cost for the workshop is $130 per person. To register, phone (306) 423-5458.

Certification of Green Certificate Testers

A number of professional development workshops are being held this fall to certify Green Certificate testers. The purpose of these workshops is to ensure that all Green Certificate testers assess students consistently across the province; so those wishing to become certified testers must attend one of these workshops. All workshops begin at 9:30 a.m. and run to 4:00 p.m. Lunch and mileage will be provided for participants. Dates and times are as follows:

- Vermilion, October 23, 2003, at Lakeland College. Contact: (780) 853-8595
- Olds, October 24, 2003, at Olds College. Contact: (403) 507-0434
- Lethbridge, October 27, 2003, at Lethbridge Community College. Contact: (780) 427-4183
- La Crete, October 29, 2003. Contact: (780) 835-6632
- Fairview, October 30, 2003, at Fairview College. Contact: (780) 835-6632
- Leduc, November 10, 2003. Contact: (780) 387-5398

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Agri-News

October 27, 2003

Protect your hay and feed from deer and elk

In some parts of Alberta, deer and elk may cause damage to stored hay and green feed during the coming winter.

Elk and deer populations in northwest Alberta in particular have grown during the past several years. If the animals cannot obtain sufficient food in their natural habitat, they will venture onto farmland to eat stacked hay or green feed.

Agricultural producers are encouraged to take steps this fall to reduce or eliminate damage by ungulates:

- move bales in from the field to a storage area that can be easily monitored
- place round straw bales two tiers high around feedstocks to act as a protective barrier
- create a permanent stack yard site by using fencing, or pound posts in the ground before it freezes to facilitate fencing with wire if necessary
- chase deer and elk from stack yards when they first appear - don't allow them to become conditioned to humans or dependent on the site as a food source
- store grain only in secure granaries or storage bins, and clean up spilled grain and loose hay
- allow access for hunting

As part of provincial big game management plans, the Fish and Wildlife Division of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development has adjusted seasons and bag limits to help increase the harvest of deer and elk.

The Fish and Wildlife Division assists producers in protecting stacked and stored feed through the Ungulate Damage Prevention Program. Scaring devices, deterrents and intercept feed may be supplied, along with information for their use. Limited supplies of temporary fencing are available, and in severe or chronic problem areas, permanent fencing may also be available. For more information, contact the nearest Fish and Wildlife Division office of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

AFSC administers a federal-provincial program to compensate producers for losses to wild ungulates. Information, including a helpful fact sheet, is available through the group's website at: www.afsc.ca/Insurance/Wildlife+Damage+Compensation+on+Stacked+Hay/. In order to qualify for AFSC's program, producers must first notify a fish and wildlife officer who will inspect the site and make recommendations to reduce damage by ungulates.

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Compensation is not intended for feed crops that have not been brought in from the field, or that are stored in a manner in which they cannot be protected.

Contact: John Lear
Communications
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
(780) 427-8636

Lyle Fullerton
Fish and Wildlife Division
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
(780) 624-6496

Merle Jacobson
Senior Manager, Insurance Operations
AFSC – Lacombe
(403) 782-8229

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free connection

Care for garden tools

"You can spend a lot of money on the good quality garden tools that are meant to last a lifetime," says Shelly Barkley, information officer, Crops Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "Using a little care before putting tools away for winter will help ensure that they do indeed fulfill this promise."

The best way to ensure a long life for your tools is to clean them after every use. At the very least, says Barkley, they should be put them away clean for winter. "Use a stiff bristle brush to clean shovels, spades, forks, and hoes. For stubborn caked-on soil, a stiff putty knife will help. After brushing the soil off, wash the tool with water. If there is rust on the blade of the hoe or shovel, remove it with emery paper or liquid rust remover. Be sure the tool is dry then wipe the metal portions with an oily (light weight motor oil) rag or spray with WD-40. Once this is done, store the tool in a dry place."

She recommends sharpening hoes and shovels to maintain a good edge before putting them away. "This can be done either by hand or by machine. Tools work better and require less effort to use when they are sharp."

Other suggestions include:

- clean the blades of the pruning equipment with a cleaner containing spirits to remove any built-up pitch and resin
- sharpen the blades of cutting tools at least once a year by running a stone or file along the beveled side of the blade. An alternative is to take valuable pruning equipment to a professional for sharpening. Oil the cutting blades after cleaning and any of the moving parts and store in a dry place
- replace broken handles with new handles. Take the tool along when buying the new handle to ensure a good fit. Give wooden tool handles a light sanding to remove splinters and rough edges, then treat them with a good preserving oil. Linseed oil works well for this
- put up a rack so you can hang tools out of the way when they're not in use
- do regular maintenance on any equipment with gas engines
- sharpen mower blades

"Gather up all hoses before winter making sure they don't have water still in them," adds Barkley. "The easiest way to do this is to first lay the hose out straight. Take one end and hold it above your head, walk to the other end letting the hose slip through your hands while holding above your head. The hose should be empty once you get to the other end. Roll them up and hang for the winter."

Local garden centres can provide information for gardeners on tool care and other horticultural issues. Also, information on yard, garden, turf, shrub and tree care is included in the Alberta Agriculture publication, ***Alberta Yards and Gardens: What to Grow***. This book contains information to help Albertans successfully grow ornamental trees and shrubs, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Cost of the publication is $15 (plus GST). Copies are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000-113 street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697. Please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping-and-handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted. To view this publication and an order form visit Alberta Agriculture's web site at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/ipc4687

Contact: Alberta Agriculture Publications Office
1-800-292-5697

City Slickers Harvest takes urban students to the country

Nearly 1,000 urban students from Edmonton and area have a better understanding of farming thanks to the City Slickers Harvest, held in Stony Plain, Alberta, on Sept. 19, 2003.

"The City Slickers Harvest is a huge undertaking that is put together to teach grade four, five and six students from the city about modern farming methods and the importance of agriculture to Alberta's economy," says Brent Andressen, agriculture awareness program consultant with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

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The one-day harvest event sees busloads of students head to Stony Plain where they spend half a day visiting working farms, the noon hour watching a harvest operation in progress and the other half of the day touring exhibits and attending presentations about agriculture.

"This year's event was a huge success and the credit has to go to the Stony Plain Multicultural Heritage Centre," notes Andressen. "The centre and its volunteers co-ordinate the venues and activities with the help of local farmers, industry, commodity organizations and Alberta Agriculture staff members."

Andressen explains that City Slickers Harvest provides a first-hand look at the agriculture industry to urban students who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity.

"Through City Slickers Harvest, these students begin to understand the complexity of farming as a business and the important role agriculture plays in Alberta," says Andressen. "At the same time, students also see that agriculture provides tremendous job opportunities to people who have not necessarily grown up on farms."

This year's experience was special in that the Stony Plain Multicultural Heritage Centre planted barley on a five-acre plot, cared for it and kept statistics regarding the use of herbicides, temperatures and the amount of precipitation it received. This information was incorporated into a guide that teachers used to help orient their students. The crop was then harvested while the students watched. A generous cash donation by the Alberta Barley Commission and a portion of the crop was given to the Edmonton Food Bank and the East Parkland Food Bank in Spruce Grove.

The first City Slickers Harvest was held in the Airdrie area in 1997. The event was moved to Stony Plain in 1999.

"The hard work of the local agriculture community, along with the financial support of industry and Alberta Agriculture has made this event more successful each year," notes Andressen. "Even the weather this year was the best we've ever had."

"I think the students and teachers enjoyed the day and went home with a greater understanding of where our food comes from," adds Andressen. "That's what City Slickers Harvest is all about."

Contact: Brent Andressen
(780) 427-4225

Lori McRae
(780) 427-4582

Dr. Robert Church awarded Distinguished Service Award

Dr. Robert (Bob) Church has been awarded the prestigious Distinguished Service Award for outstanding leadership and commitment to Alberta's agriculture and food industry. The award was presented October 17, 2003, at the sixth annual Harvest Gala celebration in Edmonton.

Well-known throughout Alberta and North America as a leader in biotechnology, agriculture and medicine, Dr. Church has invested a long and distinguished career as a champion of science, technology and applied research. In so doing, he has raised the profile of Canadian agriculture, and contributed to a greater understanding of the role of biotechnology in terms of food safety, food production and environmental stewardship.

"Dr. Church represents the vision, innovation and creativity our industry needs to grow and thrive in the global marketplace," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Individuals of his calibre raise the bar for all of us and demonstrate how creative thinking and the relentless pursuit of knowledge are the key ingredients for change and progress."

Dr. Church is well known in Calgary as the former dean of medical science at the University of Calgary, as an active board member/director on many private and public organizations, and as a rancher.

The Harvest Gala is an annual celebration of Alberta's agriculture and food industry that brings 1000 industry leaders together. A key component of the evening's activities is the presentation of the GALAs (Growing Alberta Leadership Awards) – the Distinguished Service Award being the highlight of the program. The Distinguished Service Award is presented to an individual who is acknowledged for a lifetime of commitment, leadership and outstanding service to Alberta's agriculture and food industry.

Contact: Jennifer Fisk
(780) 955-3714

Research and scientific activities support industry growth

Agriculture and food is big business in Alberta, and research and scientific activities continue to help it grow.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development recently responded to a 2002 survey conducted by the Alberta Science and Research Authority (ASRA). The survey is a part of a required government-wide annual review of research and scientific activities. Several ministry divisions that are involved in scientific activities provided data for the survey. The responses included input, output and outcomes of research and science programs. The following information illustrates the various types of scientific activities and their contributions to the industry.

"Agriculture and food is a multi billion-dollar industry in Alberta and the growth of the industry has not been without a challenge," says Mafiz Khan, a science policy agrologist with Alberta Agriculture's policy secretariat, the group that analyzed the survey data. "Alberta's producers have to deal with unpredictable weather conditions, incidence of crop and livestock diseases, and pest infestations, as well as marketplace volatility. However, developments in science and technology help address some of these issues."

Khan notes that in keeping with its mission and goals, Alberta Agriculture carries out a range of programs, some of which are aimed at advancing research, science and innovation.

"Alberta Agriculture conducts and invests in research and development (R&D) and related scientific activities (RSA), both independently and in partnership with others," says Khan.

Khan says that the programs and projects conducted are aimed at resolving industry problems.

There are four primary areas where Alberta Agriculture conducts R&D:

- value-added processing development
- livestock development
- crop development
- environmental stewardship

The focus of the research done in these primary areas in 2002 was both varied and wide. It included:

- value-added research exploring the development of new technology for crop and meat products and food safety detection methods
- livestock research concentrating on enriching meat quality, improving animal health, enhancing feeding efficiency and ensuring the humane treatment of animals
- crop research focusing on higher yields, disease resistance, health benefits, market traits, production efficiency, varietal suitability, as well as information on special and high-value crops
- environmental stewardship research concentrating on technology for mitigating agriculture's impact on soil, water and air quality (including greenhouse gases)

Khan says that this research yielded some impressive results and accomplishments. These include:

- contributing to 110 value-added products reaching the marketplace
- helping with the establishment of six new companies producing new products
- patenting one new technology
- contributing to activity and the adoption of new technologies for manufacturing
- developing new approaches to feeding efficiency and extending the grazing season
- developing business management and decision-making tools for livestock production
- developing methods for humane treatment of animals
- introducing two new barley varieties
- helping register and establish the recommended use of 28 forage and 15 grass varieties
- developing new management practices for forages, potatoes, fruits and vegetables
- providing options for growers by introducing new forage crops such as fenugreek
- developing technologies for better management of the land, water, air, livestock waste and siting of confined feeding operations
- publishing 106 scientific papers (including 55 in refereed journals) and over 230 technical papers

"Often, the research conducted by Alberta Agriculture's scientists is better appreciated when viewed over an extended period," notes Khan. "The reason for this is that the full implementation of any new development generally takes a number of years. As a result, some of the examples cited cover results achieved prior to 2002."

"It is estimated that by applying new approaches developed by Alberta Agriculture scientists for animal feeding and grazing, the province's cattle industry can benefit to the tune of $263 and $107 million per year, respectively," says Khan. "Industry can save another $3.3 million annually by utilizing the new livestock business management and marketing tools."

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The introduction of new barley varieties developed by ministry scientists is estimated to be worth over $4 billion in Alberta and the rest of Western Canada. Other significant benefits, partially resulting from Alberta Agriculture's research, include the substantial increase in triticale acreage (84,000 acres to 494,000 acres) over the last five years, as well as a 32 per cent decrease in summerfallow acreage (3.7 to 2.5 million acres) and a 94 per cent increase in direct-seeded acreage (6.4 to 12.4 million acres) between 1994 and 2002.

"Alberta Agriculture's R&D achievements are the result of a sizeable investment of human and financial resources," explains Khan. "A total of $14.5 million and close to 130 scientific, professional and technical person years were engaged in these activities in 2002."

In addition to R&D, the ministry conducted numerous related scientific activities in 2002.

These activities fall into four categories:

- food safety and animal health surveillance
- technical surveys
- feasibility studies
- information dissemination or technology transfer

Activities conducted in these areas assisted with addressing food safety issues, generating information for planning purposes, or formulating policies and regulations. They also helped with informed decision-making, providing guides for program implementation and transferring new scientific information and technology to producers and processors.

The commitment to related science activities totalled $11.45 million. Approximately 95 professional and scientific person years were devoted to these initiatives.

Contact: *Mafiz Khan*
(780) 422-6573

Agri-News Briefs

Peace Country Bison Association annual fall conference

The Peace Country Bison Association (PCBA) is holding its annual fall conference on November 13 and 14, 2003, at the Grande Prairie Inn. The conference includes the PCBA general meeting and election of officers on November 13, 2003, as well as various presentations and seminars of interest to present and future bison producers. Early registration, prior to November 1, 2003, is $70 per person, and $85 after that date. For more information or to register, call Lynette Tye at (780) 596-2237 or Kim Lucas at (250) 787-1862.

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Agri-News

November 3, 2003

Specialty crops a viable alternative

Growing specialty pulse crops can have a place on the farm for those tired of using the same crop rotation and are interested in getting in on a potential growth market.

"I recently attended an excellent update by pulse crop development officer Trevor Kloeck on the pulse crop industry," says Gordon Frank, an irrigated crop industry development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "His presentation emphasized that there are a lot of growth opportunities for specialty pulse crops."

Frank says that although pulses are not without their challenges, they have some well-documented agronomic advantages including pulse rotation and nitrogen fixation. In addition, some market trends seem to indicate a promising future for edible legume seeds such as beans, peas, chickpea, faba bean, lupines and lentils.

"Three potential growth areas for pulses have been identified as pet food, aquaculture and designer pulses," explains Frank.

Frank describes pet food as an ever-growing market where pet owners are becoming more conscious about providing their animals with food that promotes health and longevity. Also, the European Union, and to some extent other countries, are demanding animal by-product free pet food.

"The nutrient and fibre content of pulses fit this market very well as it is difficult to maintain high protein in the pet food unless pulses are used," explains Frank. "There are no Alberta companies currently producing pet food using pulses, but the potential is there."

Aquaculture is the second potential growth area for pulses. The aquaculture industry continues to grow as population increases and wild fish stocks decline.

"Pulse crops can be fed to fish in a confinement operations as faba beans at 28 to 32 per cent protein, and lupines at up to 42 per cent protein are excellent candidates to be a major ration ingredient," notes Frank. "Faba bean and lupine varieties grow well in Alberta and have improved considerably over the years at reducing unwanted flavours and toxins."

Designer pulses represent the third potential growth area. This is an emerging trend where consumers and chefs are always looking for something unique to serve.

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

"By producing a specialty pulse for a niche market you get around the low prices associated with a mass-produced commodity crop," says Frank. "Searching out these markets and directly marketing adds profits."

Examples of designer pulses include: a pea that is as orange as a ripe pumpkin, red lentils that are now split in Regina, Sask. and shipped to Turkey, specific pulses that can be used in noodles and pasta, and pulses that can be substituted for wheat to make gluten-free products.

Other consumer trends that relate to pulses include: a need for variety in a healthy diet, new partially processed products that reduce the traditional soaking and cooking time of pulses, new snack foods based on pulses, more demand for products from a growing ethnic population in Canada and an increase in popularity for pulses with the wealthy and educated world population.

"Growing pulses comes with challenges," says Frank. "Farmers need to change some traditions to grow pulses and they also need to market pulses in new ways."

Frank explains that not all consumers recognize their value and some old negative myths still exist.

"While commodity pulses are still bought on a low-bid basis, specialty pulses can be priced higher," notes Frank.

Frank adds, "Although Alberta is second only to Ontario as a pulse crop processor in Canada, Alberta is still small in the processing game."

"I feel this means there are lots of opportunities in the industry, but it will take time to build processor/farmer trust."

"Specialty pulses can have a place on your farm, but the hardest part is getting started," says Frank.

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(403) 362-1310

Agri-tourism basics

According to Dr. David Kohl, professor of agriculture and applied economics at Virginia Tech, there are seven farm business models that will represent agriculture in the next 10-15 years. Recreational rural experience farming, otherwise known as agri-tourism, is one of the seven farm business models Dr. Kohl sees shaping agriculture.

"A typical urbanite life includes traffic jams and working in office buildings with no windows," says Kerry Engel, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's farm direct marketing initiative, Westlock. "These people often work in pale gray cubicles with their heads down staring at a computer screen or talking on the phone. The recreational experience these urban folks are looking for often can be found in your own rural backyard. It's in your barn, in your town and in your business."

Engel says the best definition of agri-tourism is one coined by Jane Eckert, who is a farm direct marketing consultant from Missouri. "Eckert says agri-tourism is the intersection of travel and agriculture," says Engel. "It is anytime a visitor comes on your farm. They don't have to be from far away and don't have to pack a suitcase. In fact, you can find examples of agri-tourism taking place on working farms/ranches, at farmers' markets, local fairs, rodeos and on tours of agricultural businesses."

Engel believes that what people are looking for are new experiences. "They want to go somewhere they have never been before. People are getting tired of traditional theme parks. They are taking shorter trips and taking 3-4 trips annually instead of just one. People are traveling in their cars; this means they can pull off the road when they want to. They want to strengthen relationships when they travel. All of this makes agri-tourism a very attractive option for them."

Many agri-tourism ventures start off small and then grow as time passes. "Most of these ventures evolves from farm direct marketing," explains Engel. "Market gardens, farm gate sellers, u-pick and greenhouse operations begin the process by building agri-tourism activities into their businesses to increase sales. Once started, the process grows. Soon they are adding events, food, bakeries, shopping and a variety of other activities to their operations. The next step from there is often to start charging admission. The last level of development sees pavement, the building of permanent rest rooms and motor coach tours."

However, notes Engel, even fledgling agri-tourism operations need to have curb appeal, service and partnerships. "Curb appeal comes from scenic beauty. High ratings go to those businesses that present a great first impression. Service expectations have increased, while service has been going down. You need to nail your service, product displays and signage. Lastly, you need to find partners with others in your area that represent tourism."

As well, she says, operators have to ensure their operations are accessible to vehicles and to people with disabilities.

"Jane Eckert believes that opportunities are not only in front of us, they are beside us and behind us," explains Engel. "She says that to attract more business you need to add your personality. You can't take every idea and cookie-cut it into your farm. You need to look at your personality, geography and strengths. Throw in creativity and passion and you're off and running!"

Jane Eckert will be in Alberta this winter, offering her ***Marketing With More Creativity Than Cash*** workshop at three Alberta locations: Pincher Creek on December 1, 2003, Olds on December 2 and Leduc on December 3, 2003. Early registrants will receive one of the first copies of Jane Eckert's newest book, ***Fresh Grown Promotion***, at no additional cost, courtesy of AVAC Ltd.

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For more information on the upcoming workshops or on farm direct marketing, contact Kerry Engel, farm direct marketing initiative, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development at (780) 349-4466.

Contact: Kerry Engel
(780) 349-4466

Cattle producers try and decide what the future will bring

"Risk and uncertainty have been the name of the game for the Canadian beef industry recently, and will also continue to be so for the foreseeable future," says Jeff Millang, financial business analyst, business management innovations branch, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds. "There is a whole range of possible futures before us. In such an uncertain environment, it is very difficult to make informed management decisions. What's worse is that with the margins in beef production getting tighter every year, one wrong decision can have disastrous effects."

Millang recommends producers try and decide what is most likely to happen in the future, and then base their management decisions on this scenario.

The first step in this process is to gather as much information and as many opinions as possible about what the future may bring. "While the coffee shop is a great place to start, there are many other sources. For example, if you wondering what will unfold with the BSE situation, talk with the industry organization, check out the Canadian Cattleman's Association's BSE information website at http://www.info-cca.ca/ and talk with your organization delegates and see what they know. Talk with industry experts, or read what they have to say in their information newsletters or interviews."

The next step is to evaluate the sources of this information to try and decide which are the most informed and knowledgeable. The credible sources can then be used as a foundation in developing one or more possible future scenarios. "Develop a plan for what you will do if and when these scenarios occur," says Millang. "Then talk to the stakeholders in your business, such as your lenders, family, and input suppliers about these scenarios and the impacts they will have on them."

Millang says that once these discussions are complete it's time to start making decisions. "For example, you might be wondering whether or not to keep your calves all winter. You'll have to take stock of your financial position and see if you can afford to defer income. It's expected the cow calf sector will be cash poor this fall, and so cash flow management will be key to riding this incident out and positioning your business for the future. Should you sell your cull cows for 20 cents a pound rather than keep them all winter? Should you sell all of them, some of them, or rebreed all of them? Your answers to these questions will depend on what you have determined to be the most likely scenario for the future."

Millang says it's important to remember that there are no absolute answers and that different producers may come to different conclusions. "There is only one decision that is important to you and that is the one you have made for yourself. What your neighbor decides to do is his decision and reflects his conclusions about what prices may or may not do and whether the border will open in 60 days or 600 days."

While the future may be unknown, what is certain is that the perception of the beef industry has changed, as most likely has Canada's position in the global marketplace. "We also know that we have new aspects to our production chain, and new challenges to specific products and classes of animals," explains Millang. "At the same time, we have the opportunity to expand and grow our industry. As author Charles Dickens wrote, it was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

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Triticale initiative making progress

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's triticale team has been making good progress as it works with industry to increase market opportunities for triticale. The team consists of staff from the department's livestock, crop diversification, and business and innovation divisions.

"Producers suggest that triticale could be an important contributor to existing feeding systems, improving the financial bottom line as well as aiding sustainability," says Trevor Kloeck, business development officer, Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, Stony Plain. "With drought being a factor for Alberta farmers for a number of years now, it has become increasingly important to introduce a drought-tolerant cereal like triticale into cropping systems. As well, a number of processing opportunities for triticale look promising."

Kloeck provides the following triticale team update:

- Dr. Don Salmon of the triticale team is continuing his breeding efforts on winter and spring triticale, as well as working with Dr. Feral Temeli at the University of Alberta on a triticale compositional study. "The compositional study will provide a complete nutritional profile of the crop and will enable the triticale team to pursue various markets based on the crop's attributes," says Kloeck.
- Dr. Kevin Swallow of the Leduc Food Processing Development Center has received funding to explore food applications with modern Alberta-grown triticale cultivars. "Results so far indicate that triticale has a distinct and very pleasant flavour that should be appealing to consumers,"

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comments Kloeck. "Triticale has also been found to be suitable in many, but not all food applications, and food processors have started showing interest in the crop. We're currently working on an information brochure to promote triticale's food attributes to potential processors."

- Triticale surveys sent out by the team will be completed by November, 2003, and will include data from growers, non-growers, and provincial feedlots. "Farmers appear to be convinced about the agronomic benefits triticale has to offer but are still asking questions about animal performance when fed triticale," explains Kloeck. "Some producers haven't had any difficulty while others have had some problems with palatability and animal-performance. A research study to address why some producers report animal performance issues and others don't is being considered for the near future."
- Preliminary meetings with AFSC to get more representative insurance coverage for triticale have been encouraging. Yield data from triticale research trials is being evaluated to see if it can be used to benchmark triticale performance relative to common cereal varieties such as wheat and barley.
- Triticale ethanol is showing good potential. "Research conducted at the University of Saskatchewan indicates that the ethanol yield of triticale grain is roughly equivalent to wheat," says Kloeck. "Given the yield benefits of triticale, especially in dry regions, the crop could become an important factor in improving the competitiveness of the ethanol industry in the future. Triticale's abundant straw yields could also contribute significantly to future straw-based industries."
- Staff from Alberta Agriculture's crop diversification division have been working with research associations and industry partners across Alberta conducting triticale demonstrations and research. "This year's work has covered everything from minor-use herbicide trials (a major growth barrier) to agronomy/grain quality studies," explains Kloeck. "Triticale's drought tolerance and yield potential could make it an important grain of the future for drier areas of Alberta; as such, this production work will serve as an important foundation for future market opportunities."
- A quickplace site has been established to facilitate communication between triticale team members. "A quickplace is an online workspace for collaboration among workgroups. It enables the creation of a secure central workspace on the web and the sharing and tracking of documents," adds Kloeck. "Having this site has made communication among the team considerably easier and should help us out even more as we move forward in the future."

Contact: *Trevor Kloeck*
(780) 968-3517

Consumers protected against high winter gas prices

Eligible agriculture consumers can apply for rebates for other months

Under the revised Natural Gas Rebate Program, certain agriculture consumers may apply for rebates for an optional five-month period during the fiscal year, starting April 1, 2003.

The rebate program kicks in when prices for the majority of Albertans are over $5.50/gigajoule.

In releasing the final details of the program, Energy Minister Murray Smith announced that commercial greenhouses, alfalfa dehydrators, grain dryers, and irrigators can specify which optional five-month period they wish to be used for rebate purposes. All other Albertans are eligible for rebates between November and March.

"This program is in place to provide protection when you need it most – and for the majority of Albertans this is over the winter, when their consumption is traditionally highest," Smith said. "Certain agriculture consumers use more natural gas during spring and summer and to ensure they're treated fairly, they have the flexibility to get a rebate for these months."

Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Shirley McClellan welcomed the relief from high natural gas prices. "The past few years have been difficult for agriculture," said McClellan. "By recognizing the unique needs of some agriculture sectors, this program offers them the same protection as other natural gas consumers."

As in 2001, rebates for propane, heating oil and kerosene users will be based on volumes purchased during the month in which a rebate has been declared.

The government is monitoring prices and will advise by month's end whether a rebate will be triggered for this November.

More information on the Alberta government natural gas rebate program is available from www.gov.ab.ca.

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(780) 422-7683

Agri-News Briefs

Scholarship available for major farm direct marketing conference

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's ag-entrepreneurship division and the Camrose Regional Exhibition are offering a scholarship that will partially sponsor two Alberta agri-preneurs to attend the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) tour and conference. This year's conference will be held in California from February 2-8, 2004. Conference participants have the opportunity to see new marketing ideas and innovations and meet other farm direct marketers, ag-tourism operators and farmers' market managers. More information on the conference is available from http://www.nafdma.com. The scholarship will pay the registration fees for two agri-preneurs to attend the pre-conference tour and conference as well as a one-year membership in NAFDMA. The agri-preneurs will be required to pay for their own travel, accommodation and some meals. To be eligible for the scholarship, applicants must: presently own and operate a farm direct marketing or ag-tourism business or manage an Alberta Approved Farmers' Market, be committed to lifelong learning and willing to share their ideas and experiences on their return to Alberta, have enthusiasm for farm direct marketing and ag tourism, and be willing to act as ambassadors for the Alberta farm direct marketing industry. Applications are available by calling Alberta Agriculture in Camrose at (780) 679-1360. The application deadline is November 28, 2003. For more information, call Marian Williams at (780) 679-1360 or e-mail marian.williams@gov.ab.ca.

Organic farming for small holdings

Lakeland College and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development are holding an organic farming workshop entitled ***Organic Farming for Small Holdings*** on November 28-29, 2003, at the Leaning Centre, 172-2257 Premier Way, Broadmoor Place IV, Sherwood Park, Alberta. This workshop will be of interest to anyone who would like to know more about what is involved in becoming a certified organic grower and marketer of organic foods. It would also be of interest to those who seek a better understanding of what "certified organic" really means. For further information or to register call 1-800-661-6490 toll-free or visit the Lakeland College website at www.lakelandc.ab.ca.

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Agri-News

November 10, 2003

Is it a rat or a rodent?

Autumn is the time of year when young animals leave the family unit and begin seeking a home of their own. Although this is nothing new to rodents, it can be a little confusing to the uninitiated urban and country resident.

"During the fall months people often encounter small animals like rodents under unusual and bewildering circumstances and surroundings," says John Bourne, vertebrate pest specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vermilion. "In reality, young or juvenile rodents are only doing what comes naturally - seeking a home of their own. The trouble is that dispersing young rodents often wind up in unusual locations or situations leaving the casual observer bewildered. Such unusual behaviour leads the observer to conclude the animal in question might be a rat because 'regular' rodents don't behave so peculiarly."

For instance, says Bourne, it is not unusual to see a rat-sized, juvenile muskrat scamper beneath the parked car in the garage, or behind stored boxes or other garage items. It is also not unnatural to see a 'rat-sized' rodent lumbering across the parking lot at the shopping mall at mid-day. Nor is a rodent scurrying along main street in busy downtown traffic worthy of panic.

"The fact of the matter is these naïve and misguided creatures have merely lost their way and are not trying to disguise themselves as rats," says Bourne. "Juvenile muskrats, pocket gophers, woodrats and many mice species as well as other larger animals such as coyotes, foxes and skunks are simply looking to set-up shop once they find a suitable location."

Bourne says there are several ways to tell most common rodents from rats:

- the most distinguishing feature of a Norway or roof rat is its long, cylindrical, hairless tail that is nearly as long as the animal's seven-or-eight-inch body. All native rodents including muskrats have considerably shorter tails covered with hair
- unlike native rodents, Norway rats have very small eyes and short ears that do not reach the eye, while roof rats have long ears that touch the eye and large black eyes. Both have a short, almost blunt-shaped nose
- true rats have very small, dainty, pinkish-coloured feet that are almost hairless with fine, short claws, while most common rodents have long, heavy claws for digging

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"The most important step after identifying a rat is contacting an Alberta Agriculture, municipal or city by-law office as soon as possible," adds Bourne. "Be sure to preserve as much evidence as possible for identification, including any animal remains, nesting materials and droppings."

Contact: John Bourne
(780) 853-8225

Cash-flow management for cow-calf producers

Cash comes in and goes out all the time in any business, but when times get tough cash seems to go out more than it comes in. During these periods of reduced revenue, cash flow needs to be managed and monitored even more intensely than it does in better times. Many cow-calf producers are looking at reduced revenues this fall, either from lower prices of calves or the reduced prices for cull animals. As such, it is critical to plan for this reduction and prepare for other expenses that may arise.

"Cash flow budgets are not hard to use or create," says Jeff Millang, financial business analyst, business management innovations branch, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds. "It's a forward-planning tool; that means you only need to worry about what is coming at you down the road. What is your cash balance now? Are there any outstanding bills? Once you answer these questions you can begin to detail where the cash is coming from and going to."

Millang recommends making a list of what is coming in such as revenue from calf or cow sales, and what is going out, including family expenses, utilities, feed purchases and debt payments. "This list is easy to create. Make sure to include when everything is due. Using a tool like the rolling cash flow forecaster (http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/economic/mgmt/spreadsheet/cashflow.html) helps you organize your thinking and can pinpoint future shortages or surpluses. It can help you and your lender work out rescheduling of payments, or paying off bills early, or arranging for credit before it's needed."

Millang notes that cash typically comes from four places:

- operations – profit/loss from this year's production
- investments – sale or purchase of assets
- financing – paying down debt (saving interest) or incurring more debt either through equity or financed debt
- personal – cash contribution to the business by the owner or family

"There are several keys to setting up a cash-flow plan," says Millang. "First off, you should determine your cash flow requirements. From there, formulate a basic plan, preparing several short and long-term scenarios. Once a basic plan is in mind, decide if you'll have to sell of some of your assets to generate cash. If the answer is yes, ask yourself how much cash do you need to create. Which assets should you sell first; young heifers, bred heifers, or breeding cows? And don't forget the other options like refinancing operating loans and/or restructuring intermediate and long-term debt."

Millang cites the following as some of the ways to generate cash flow:

- leave the operating credit balance as outstanding but negotiate a new/additional line of credit
- term out your operating line of credit to intermediate or long-term debt. This may impact debt structure and potential future profitability
- control both short-term and long-term costs
- reduce input costs for the current production cycle
- replace hired labour with family labour
- lease/rent out unproductive or unused assets
- take on off-farm work
- add an equity infusion from non-farm investments, such as a NISA account, savings, RRSP's, or non-farming assets
- sell assets that are not critical to the farming operation

"All of these all have other implications but with planning they can be used as an alternative cash injection," notes Millang.

"Once you have a plan in mind consult your lenders," says Millang. "They are much more likely to be helpful if they are involved in the decision than if you come to them at the 11th hour with no plan. They have the experience and tools to look at different scenarios and help in the planning process."

"The key to surviving and lasting through any downturn is cash-flow management," concludes Millang. "By managing your cash flow properly you will stay in the game long enough to be around when things start to recover. Balancing cash-flow management with long-term profitability is the key to any financial-management system."

Additional assistance is available through the new Canadian Farm Business Advisory service which can be accessed by calling 1-866-452-5558. For more information on cash-flow management call Alberta Agriculture's Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.

Contact: Jeff Millang
(403) 556-4326

Emergency livestock care response plan

Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) has put an emergency livestock care response plan in place. This plan is designed to help producers who may be experiencing mounting strain due to the combined impact of last year's drought, the fallout of BSE and extremely limited markets for some livestock species.

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"As livestock producers, we have the moral and legal responsibility to care and provide for our livestock in a humane manner," said Aart Okkema, chairman of Alberta Farm Animal Care. "We encourage producers to call our animal care ALERT line should they be concerned about the care of their animals." The phone line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help producers make sound and humane decisions. The number for the ALERT line is 1-(800)-506-2273.

In addition to including the ALERT line, AFAC's emergency livestock care response plan includes provisions for an on-site response team to ensure livestock are properly cared for. The plan also ensures that:

- producers in need of crisis support for livestock care receive knowledgeable counsel and that a network is available to connect resources with need
- sufficient feed and bedding is available for use in emergency seizure and surrender situations so livestock in distress are cared for
- funds are used to assist the animals. No funds will flow directly to a producer

"We encourage anyone to call or self-report if they have concerns about livestock well-being," says Okkema.

AFAC's mandate is to promote responsible animal care. "Since 1995 AFAC has provided an action-line-and-response-team service called Animal Care ALERT," says Okkema. "Over 100 experienced livestock producers and handlers assist with the ALERT phone line. As well, AFAC works closely with the Alberta SPCA, whose constables provide livestock protection services throughout the province, and with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association."

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Farm direct marketing guru coming to Alberta

Farm direct marketing guru Jane Eckert is bringing her ***Marketing With More Creativity Than Cash*** workshops to Alberta the week of December 1-3, 2003.

"Jane Eckert is an expert on farm marketing," says Kerry Engel, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, farm direct marketing initiative, Westlock. "As vice-president of marketing for her family farm, she increased revenue by more than 300 per cent through her unique approach to marketing."

Engel says today's farm direct marketers have to know much more than how to grow crops and raise animals. "With the problems they face in commodity pricing, successful farmers realize there are profits to be made selling what they produce directly to consumers," she says "But most farmers have not been educated about marketing and the particular savvy it takes to sell farm products to consumers. Whether they're selling at a farmer's market, at a roadside stand or from a retail outlet on their property, all farmers have to develop marketing tools and strategies."

Engel says that how to develop cost-effective market tools and strategies is what Eckert is coming here to teach. "In working with hundreds and hundreds of farmers through her consulting business and speeches, Eckert knows that too often producers waste their very limited marketing funds on advertising, which is rarely effective on a small budget. Instead, Eckert teaches them marketing strategies that use more creativity than dollars for a high return in revenue."

"Eckert's winning approach to promotions, customer communications, publicity and sales techniques are all designed to increase revenues, even with a minimum marketing budget," adds Engel. "After attending her seminars, family farmers are empowered to make easy and immediate changes for positive financial results. Whether novice or advanced marketers, everyone will learn key strategies to help them grow, thrive and survive."

Jane Eckert's ***Marketing With More Creativity Than Cash*** workshop will be held at three Alberta locations: Pincher Creek on December 1, 2003, Olds on December 2 and Leduc on December 3. Early registrants will receive one of the first copies of Jane Eckert's newest book, ***Fresh Grown Promotion***, at no additional cost, courtesy of AVAC Ltd.

For more information on the upcoming workshops or on farm direct marketing, contact Kerry Engel, farm direct marketing initiative, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development at (780) 349-4466.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4466

Bon Accord, Didsbury 4-H leaders honoured

As Canada celebrates 90 years of 4-H, the province has named Leona Petherbridge of Bon Accord, and Bert and Pat Pringle of Didsbury as the 2003 inductees to the Alberta 4-H Hall of Fame.

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, announced the names at the beginning of National 4-H Week, November 3 to 9, 2003. "Alberta has a strong and proud history with 4-H as do these three Albertans," said McClellan. "This year's inductees have truly made youth development a part of their life's work. They have devoted themselves to the youth of this province and have made the 4-H program a richer experience for every young Albertan they have mentored."

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Leona Petherbridge has been involved with 4-H for more than 42 years and has seen all four of her children go through the 4-H program. The founder of the Gibbons Sew and Sews club in 1969, she was recently named the provincial recipient of the 2003 Co-operators and Canadian 4-H Council Volunteer of the Year award.

Bert and Pat Pringle have long histories of involvement with 4-H including work at the regional and provincial level. Bert and Pat have won numerous awards for their volunteer work in the community including the Didsbury Agricultural Society Commemorative 100th Anniversary Rural Volunteer Award in 2002.

This year's inductees join the ranks of 57 Alberta volunteers inducted to the 4-H Hall of Fame since it began in 1971. Each inductee has made outstanding contributions to 4-H program development and is a leader in the 4-H movement.

Leona Petherbridge and Bert and Pat Pringle will be officially honoured at the annual 4-H Leaders' Conference in Red Deer on January 10, 2004.

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Agri-News Briefs

Alberta 2002 Beekeepers' Survey

Results from the ***Alberta 2002 Beekeepers' Survey*** show that the estimated number of beekeepers declined in 2002. There were roughly five per cent fewer beekeeepers in the province at 702, compared to 739 in 2001. While producer numbers declined in 2002, colony numbers remained the same as the previous year. There were 227,000 colonies, which matches the industry record high set in 2001. Final estimates indicate total production stood at 29.7 million pounds, compared to the preliminary fall estimates of 24.1 million pounds. This marked increase in production was the result of a higher-than-expected provincial average yield of 131 pounds per colony, which was the highest for the province since 1998. For further information on the ***Alberta 2002 Beekeepers' Survey***, contact Roy Larsen at (780) 644-1308, e-mail roy.larsen@gov.ab.ca, or Reynold Jaipaul at (780) 427-5376, e-mail reynold.jaipaul@gov.ab.ca.. Results are also available on-line at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/sdd7015.

Montana organic conference

The Montana organic community is holding its first statewide conference for organic producers, consumers, processors, and retailers on December 5, 2003, at the Ursuline Centre in Great Falls, Montana. The event will include educational presentations and workshops, an all-Montana-organic buffet lunch, a buyer's forum where processors and traders of organic foods can speak about their products, a trade show and more. Registration is $35 U.S. before November 14, 2003, and $50 U.S. if after. For more information or to register, contact Jill Davies at (406) 642-3259, e-mail rivercare@blackfoot.net.

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November 17, 2003

Biodiesel shows promise as cleaner-burning fuel

New renewable fuels on the horizon could mean a cleaner-burning alternative to traditional petroleum and an opportunity for new agricultural markets.

"One of those fuels, biodiesel, shows tremendous promise because of its cleaner-burning nature and its potential ability to increase market opportunities for Canadian agricultural products," says Kelly Lund, engineer-in-training, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Red Deer. "A new interest in making biodiesel more cost-competitive with regular diesel will also increase its attractiveness."

Lund says biodiesel and other renewable fuels are experiencing a revival as jurisdictions worldwide are looking to increase energy and economic security, as well as ensure long-term environmentally sustainable energy production.

"The federal government is recognizing this trend and has started to increase its support for renewable fuels," says Lund. "The focus is largely on ethanol, but a new public policy is being planned that eliminates the fuel tax on all renewable fuels, including biodiesel. This will make biodiesel more cost-competitive with petroleum products."

So far, high production and consumption costs for renewable fuels have prohibited the industry's development. However, the new policy would put the cost to the consumer of these fuels more on par with gasoline and regular diesel, potentially increasing their demand.

"Biodiesel is derived from vegetable oil or animal fat," says Lund. "In their natural state, these fats are too viscous to be used effectively in a diesel engine that has not been modified. However, reducing the viscosity by cracking the fats and removing the glycerine makes them suitable for use in biodiesel production."

Many field crops are suitable to make this type of oil, but in Canada, canola would likely be the crop of choice to produce it, says Lund.

Alcohol in the form of either ethanol, which can be made using grains, soybeans or corn, or methanol is then added to bind to the remaining fat compounds, the esters. The final result, which is an alcohol-based compound, is the biodiesel product.

Lund says that other than cost, there are no obvious performance reasons to limit biodiesel development. "Over the past 15 years, research by North American university research programs and others, has found that while some cold-weather-blending technology may be required, there is no indication

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that biodiesel performance is less than that of its petroleum counterpart." In fact, says Lund, research shows there are advantages to using biodesel:

- even at low blend amounts biodesel provides lubricity to the engine, extending engine life
- using biodiesel increases safety because of its higher combustion temperature and, because of the natural oxygenation process, provides a more complete burn and therefore fewer emissions
- biodesel is also less persistent in the environment and has received lots of attention as a fuel of choice in sensitive marine and other protected environments

While diodiesel is not commercially available in Canada yet, Lund says there have recently been developments in its production. "A Foam Lake, Saskatchewan company produces and sells biodiesel as a specialized lubricity additive. A Westbank, B.C., company produces biodiesel on a small scale for its own use and consults on small-scale biodiesel production. And, a company in Toronto has developed a continuous biodiesel process and is sponsoring a trial using Toronto Hydro fleet vehicles."

Lund adds that while individuals can produce biodiesel on a small scale by chemically transforming oil in a batch process, it isn't advisable. "Those individuals can have their vehicle fuel system warranties invalidated if the biodiesel is not produced to very specific standards."

Contact: Kelly Lund
(403) 340-5375

Rick Atkins
(403) 329-1212

Business planning basics

While the idea of business planning may not excite very many, proper planning can make a business start-up less painful and can help turn things around in bad times.

"Most of us would much rather do the production rather than sit and plan," says Gordon Frank, an agrologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Brooks. "We don't even like to read business articles and if we do we don't put the ideas into action."

Statistics say that 45 per cent of all new businesses fail, and that new and existing farms are not immune from this. "I suspect that, of those who survive, many would say that their venture is not as profitable as they had hoped," says Frank.

Proper business planning is often the difference between a venture that succeeds and one that does not, says Frank. "The good news here is that planning pays off. If plans are in place and constantly reviewed and updated you can make changes faster and with more certainty of success."

Frank notes that business planning is not very effective if it is limited to the financial basics that can be scratched onto a note pad in one evening at the kitchen table. "Like it or not, a good business plan will take several days or even weeks to prepare and will require some research. The most value may be in the preparation because that is when you will have to think through all the issues and make some really difficult decisions."

There are courses and consultants by the dozens willing to help with business planning, explains Frank. Producers can also opt to try business planning on their own, with the help of the Internet or a book from the library or a bookstore.

Typical section titles in a book on business planning might include the following:

- cover sheet
- executive summary
- table of contents
- history mission statement
- description of products or services
- marketing
- management ownership and organization
- objectives and goals
- financial position
- appendices

"For now you will have to imagine what content and usefulness each section would have," explains Frank. "This all looks pretty formal but consider the value for your banker, your family and your own peace of mind. To know where you have been, where you are now and where you plan to go takes a lot of stress off your mind. It does not take away all the uncontrollable events but it will help you cope with them much better."

There are also a number of on-line tools to help with business planning. "Try the business owner's toolkit at www.toolkit.cch.com. It was recommended to me at a course and is pretty good," says Frank. "There's also a good site that's been put up as part of the renewal component of the Agriculture Policy Framework. It's at www.agr.gc.ca/renewal/services, and provides information on agricultural programs and services, as well as some useful downloads and links."

"There is also a personal consulting program to help you decide what is best for you," notes Frank. "For no charge you can call the Canadian Farm Business Advisory Services at 1-866-452-5558 and speak to a program officer. They will help you decide if one of their programs can help you. Their options include developing a farm business assessment and action plan which only costs the farmer $100 for up to five days worth of consultation services."

Gordon adds that proper business planning can make all the difference between a successful venture and one that fails. "And while it's not always easy to ask for help, it may be better than the alternative. Think about it."

Contact: Gordon Frank
(403) 362-1310

New forage and beef production website available soon

A new website that aims to provide sound information on forage and beef production is set to go public early next month.

"The new site, www.foragebeef.ca, will provide visitors with a wide array of information relating to both current Canadian agricultural issues and the technical side of forage and beef production," says Ken Ziegler, beef production systems specialist with the Western Forage Beef Group in Lacombe. "The new site is a co-operative venture among Alberta Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Saskatchewan Agriculture; Food and Rural Revitalization, and Manitoba Agriculture and Food."

The technical section of the new site is organized into three levels of information to make navigation easier. "Level one is the straight forward 'cut to the core' type of information that you may want on a particular topic," says Ziegler. "We've identified the most important pieces of information that address a topic. These nuggets are brief, concise and summarize the issues around a topic very efficiently."

Level two is for the reader that wants more information about a particular topic. "For that, we've searched the web and found many fact sheets from other web sites that will inform you about your topic of interest," explains Ziegler. "From literally thousands of fact sheets, we selected the best and culled the rest. Our main mandate was to select the most comprehensive and applicable fact sheets to Western Canadian agriculture."

Ziegler says level three is the storehouse for the research community and is tailored to the analyzer who wants to know how the information was derived. "It consists of scientific review papers, research abstracts or summaries and links to research communities through out Canada and the world."

However, Ziegler notes that no website can cover everything, and visitors to the site may come to the point where they want to talk with someone about a particular forage or beef issue. "Our recommendation is that you contact a local agrologist in your area of interest. Because climatic conditions affect management practices, it is important that you contact someone that is credible to the topic area and your situation. People from government or from private industry will be able to help you best."

The new site is expected to be available on-line to the public the first week of December, 2003.

Contact: *Ken Ziegler*
(403) 845-8204

Update on Alberta's beef and live cattle trade

(January to June, 2003)

"In the first half of 2003 Alberta continued to be the number-one exporter of beef and live cattle among the provinces in Canada," says Barbara Pekalski, trade research statistician, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "In terms of value, over the past five years (1998-2002) Alberta has accounted for about 75 per cent of total Canadian beef exports, and 43 per cent of cattle exports. In 2002 (annual) and 2003 (Jan-Jun), Alberta's share of exported beef from Canada remained the same as the five-year average of 75 per cent, while the share of live cattle exports was below the average, at 35 per cent for 2002 and 33 per cent for 2003."

Pekalski notes that the recent incident of a single case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in Alberta and the closure of the United States border on May 20, 2003, to Canadian beef and cattle (followed by several other countries) has continued to negatively impact the beef and cattle sector and Alberta total agri-food exports.

Pekalski cites the following details:

- Beef and live cattle are significant contributors to Alberta's agri-food exports. For the first half of 2003, both categories combined represented 40 per cent of Alberta's total agri-food exports, compared to 44 per cent for the same period in 2002. Also, for the fifth consecutive year, beef was Alberta's number-one export product followed by wheat and live cattle.
- In 2003 (Jan-Jun), exports of live cattle and beef were significantly affected by the closure of international borders. Revenue from exports of live cattle fell about 36 per cent from the same period in 2002, to $196 million and quantity dropped 40 per cent to 139,753 head (including 43 head of purebred cattle). Beef exports declined 23 per cent to $649 million, while quantity fell 24 per cent to 145,668 tonnes. About 79 per cent of exported beef was boneless beef cuts ($511 million), while 13 per cent was beef cuts with bone in, and carcasses and half-carcasses ($89 million), and eight per cent was beef edible offal ($49 million).

"The United States remains Alberta's most important market, accounting for almost all exported non-purebred cattle and about 80 per cent of beef," explains Pekalski. "As a result of the U.S border closure, exports of live cattle and beef to the U.S dropped significantly in May and amounted to zero in June 2003. From January to June 2003, total sales of live cattle to the U.S declined 36 per cent ($196 million), while beef sales were 24 per cent lower ($508 million) than in the same period a year earlier. In terms of export volumes, Alberta shipped 139,668 head of non-purebred cattle to the U.S market and

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108,902 tonnes of beef. Eighty-three percent of this beef total was boneless beef cuts (fresh, chilled and frozen) which continued to be the main category of beef exported to the U.S."

In the first six months of 2003 the top five markets for Alberta beef were:

- United States ($508 million)
- Mexico ($68 million)
- Japan ($34 million)
- South Korea ($22 million)
- Taiwan ($10 million)

"Exports of beef to these five countries combined ($642 million) made up 99 per cent of Alberta's total value of beef exports," says Pekalski. "South Korea and Taiwan were the only two markets to show increased beef purchases." Exports to South Korea were up 4.4 per cent while Taiwan rose 34.8 per cent.

On the import side, the value and number of live cattle (mainly feeders) brought into Alberta have declined in recent years. Among the Canadian provinces, Alberta has shifted from being the largest importer of non-purebred cattle to the fourth largest. During the first half of 2003, Alberta imported 1,755 head of cattle (worth $1.8 million) compared to 4,864 in 2002 ($4.0 million) and 39,162 (worth $34.9 million) in the first half of 2001. "Two years of drought in the province coupled with high feed costs were major factors contributing to the decline," she explains. "On the other hand, imports of purebred cattle rose to 59 head in 2003 from 40 head in 2002 but were still much lower than the 136 head imported in the first half of 2001. As always, all imported cattle into Alberta were from the United States."

Contrary to the declining imports of live cattle, Alberta imports of beef, at $21 million, more than doubled in the first half of 2003, compared to $9.8 million in the same period of 2002. Nationally, Alberta ranked as the fifth largest importer of beef, accounting for 4.3 per cent in dollar value and 2.3 per cent in quantity. Ontario remains the number one importer of beef in Canada.

"The United States continued to be Alberta's largest supplier of imported beef. In 2003 (Jan-Jun), Alberta purchased 2,855 tonnes of beef worth $20 million or 95 per cent of its total beef import value from the U.S.," says Pekalski. "The majority of this imported beef was boneless cuts (fresh, chilled and frozen)."

As far as the current situation is concerned, the reopening of international borders to Canadian beef and live cattle exports continues to be the primary focus.

"In August, 2003, the United States and Mexico, Alberta's largest customers, announced the partial opening of their borders to Canadian boneless beef from cattle under 30 months of age at slaughter, as well as bovine livers, effective September 1, 2003," says Pekalski. "Also, Russia, Philippines, Antigua, Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago have recently partially lifted their bans on Canadian beef. As recent statistics have shown, the majority of Alberta beef exports to the U.S and Mexico are boneless cuts, while exports to Russia are mainly livers. The reopening of borders for these categories of beef will partially restore the beef market."

On the negative side, however, says Pekalski, borders still remain closed to Alberta live cattle. "Considering two years of drought and the current situation in the livestock sector, Alberta's annual 2003 exports of beef and live cattle are expected to be significantly lower than the already lower 2002 exports. We expect these reduced exports will negatively impact overall agri-food exports."

Contact: *Barbara Pekalski*
(780) 427-5386

Agri-News Briefs

Capturing Feed Grain and Forage Opportunities Conference

Feeding and Selling is the theme of the ***Capturing Feed Grain and Forage Opportunities Conference*** being held at the Capri Hotel in Red Deer on December 2 and 3, 2003. Topics covered will include how producers can reduce feed costs, diversify feed cropping options, understand the value of a feed crop and create value-chains. The keynote speaker is Kansas State University's Dr. Keith Bolsen, who will be talking about the international beef market. The conference is being developed by the Western Forage and Beef Group, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Alberta Environmental Sustainable Agriculture, the Alberta Association of Agricultural Fieldmen and the Alberta Research and Extension Council. For further information, call 1-800-387-6030 toll-free in Alberta or call (403) 742-7942 if out-of-province.

Challenges to European Agriculture and Food

The University of Alberta is welcoming Dr. Liam Donnelly, one of Ireland's foremost experts in research and technology transfer to the dairy and food ingredients industries, as the next speaker in the Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science (AFNS) seminar series. Donnelly, director of Moorepark Food Research, Cork, Ireland, will speak on the subject *Challenges to European Agriculture and Food*. This session in the seminar series is being held at the Maple Leaf Room, Lister Centre, U of A Conference Centre, Edmonton, on November 27, 2003 at 4:30 p.m. The AFNS seminar series is sponsored by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, AVAC Ltd., the U of A Department of AFNS, and the U of A Faculty of Agriculture Forestry and Home Economics. For further information, contact Sharon Katzeff, public relations coordinator, (780) 492-0379, e-mail: sharon.katzeff@ualberta.ca.

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November 24, 2003

Crop nutrient availability – managing the fertilizer input

Because the fluctuation of natural gas prices has a direct effect on the cost of nitrogen fertilizers, farmers must continually find new ways to stabilize their dollars spent on this important crop nutrient. Optimizing every pound of nitrogen applied or available in a field will increase the yield potential and value of most crops. Reduced tillage options have increased profitability for growers with direct seeding and precision-placed fertilizers, which eliminate extra field passes, lower fuel consumption, and improve equipment efficiencies. Another approach worth discussing is how to increase nitrogen efficacy, where N-loss through volatilization (ammonia loss) is a factor.

"The scientific basis for the many interacting factors effecting nitrogen is complex, however, all soils have the potential to volatilize urea-containing nitrogen fertilizer when it reacts with soil moisture and converts to ammonia," says Ron Heller, agronomist with Alberta Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, Vermilion. "An enzyme (urease) produced by soil microbes facilitates the reaction but soil and air temperature plus organic matter and pH also influence the outcome."

One of the latest innovations in nitrogen management is the advent of additives aimed at controlling the conversion of urea fertilizer (dry) and UAN (liquid) into ammonia. Some of these products reportedly inhibit the urease enzyme and allow up to two weeks for rainfall or tillage to safely move urea into the soil. Other commercial fertilizer products are being researched to evaluate how to manipulate nutrient release by coating the granule with polymers that control the rate of breakdown in soil and ultimately, availability for crop uptake.

For producers seeking new avenues in crop response to fertility, this sort of technology offers an opportunity for field-testing at low risk. At worst, no additive benefits will occur yet traditional performance from the fertilizer component could still be expected. If the products achieve what they are intended to, the results would be obvious even within small parcels or test plots. Some of the coated versions are pending registration, but some should be available through local farm supply outlets upon inquiry.

"In my opinion, some potential trial-applications might include spring-broadcast on tame hay and pasture land, nitrogen top-up for winter cereals, pre-seeding stubble broadcast without tillage incorporation," says Heller, "or perhaps some variable increased rates of seed-placed fertilizer in direct seeding systems."

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The availability and adoption of new fertilizer formulations or products is still quite new to the prairies, but the concept holds high interest for those who see a need for improved nutrient management. Surface-broadcasting granular or dribble-banding liquid are convenient methods to apply fertilizer, but at the same time they can be risky year to year in terms of losses that occur under specific field conditions. Seed-placement in a one-pass planting system (direct seeding) can be compromised for the sake of fertilizer requirements unless a sophisticated implement design is used.

"It would be nice to grow crops in a manner that guarantees our investment in time, equipment and product gets converted to profit from sufficient yields and quality soil," adds Heller. "Reducing tillage and equipment engineering have contributed significantly to this goal. The quest for greater fertilizer efficiency is a revolution that continues. Farmers should inquire through their local fertilizer retailer about these and other products available for them to try on a few acres."

For more information about nutrient management, soil fertility or direct seeding, call Heller (780) 853-8262 or visit Reduced Tillage LINKAGES on the internet at: www.reducedtillage.ca.

Contact: *Ron Heller*
(780) 853-8262

Horse Breeders and Owners Conference

Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference, organized by the Horse Industry Section of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the Horse Industry Association of Alberta is being held on January 9, 10 and 11, 2004 at the Capri Centre in Red Deer.

"Each year, the conference features excellent speakers who present information on current topics and issues that Albertans in the equine industry will be interested in," says Les Burwash, horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie. "This year, an impressive line-up of speakers will make presentations on research findings, marketing information and training ideas and techniques."

Conference presenters for 2004 include:

- **Dr. Claire Card**, Saskatoon, SK – Improving Reproductive Efficiency
- **Philip Haugen**, Weatherford. Oklahoma – Round Pen Reasoning
- **Dr. Lori Warren**, Fort Collins, Colorado – Conquering 'Mount Manure'
- **Ester Schwab**, Edmonton – Home on the Range: A Review of Recent Law Regarding Fencing, Trespass and Liability Issues
- **Joy Ripley**, Calgary – Societal Changes in Animal Welfare
- **Muffy Knox**, Keoma – What to Expect From Riding Lessons
- **Dr. Hilary Clayton**, East Lansing, Michigan – Locomotion and Performance of the Athletic Horse – Footing and Shoeing
- **Dr. Nancy Loving**, Boulder, Colorado – Heat Stress and the Equine Athlete
- **Dr. Jon Foreman**, Urbana, Illinois – Do Thyroid Disorders in Horses Really Exist? – Medication, Rules and the Well-being of the Horse
- **Jim McCrae**, Aldergrove, B.C. – Safety in the Back Country
- **Dr. Jeff Goodwin**, Moscow, Idaho – Getting Young People Involved in the Industry
- **Roger Daly**, Aubry, Texas – Fitting Horses for Sale

For the past four years, the Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference has been pleased to honour an Albertan or group of Albertans for their contribution to enhancing the horse industry. Selection criteria for this award include: significant accomplishments (40%); public benefit (30%); industry creditability (20%); and, potential for continued contribution to the industry (10%). Nominations can be sent to the Horse Industry Section of Alberta Agriculture, 909 Irricana Road N., Airdrie, AB T4A 2G6. Nominations must be received by November 28, 2003.

"This conference offers different programs designed to fit different equine interests," says Burwash. "Conference participants can attend any of the sessions and will receive the printed materials from all sessions."

The program starts with a wine and cheese reception on Friday, January 9 at 7:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday's sessions begin at 8:40 a.m.

Conference registration is $85 per person. For more information about the 2004 conference, contact Burwash in Airdrie at (403) 948-8538. Government numbers are toll free by dialing 310-0000 first.

Contact: *Les Burwash*
(403) 948-8538

Agriculture books make great gifts

As December approaches, the same questions come up every year – What do you buy for the person who has everything? Where can you find that something special, just the gift to give that 'hard-to-buy-for' person on your list?

Books make a great gift. For the gardening enthusiast, farmer, rancher, student or 4-H member on your list, it may be worth your while to check out some of the book choices available from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

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There are dozens of agriculture publications, ranging from $3 to $30, that make terrific gifts and stocking-stuffers. For example:

- ***Alberta Yards and Gardens*** ($15 plus GST) – gives a fresh, unbiased look at what grows best in Alberta. It's packed with information about selecting ornamental trees and shrubs, lawns, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Homeowners, hobby gardeners, serious horticulturists and landscape artists will find this book invaluable. It also gives tips and techniques for pruning, wintering roses, container gardening and attracting birds and butterflies.
- ***Garden-fresh Produce*** ($4 plus GST) – for advice on picking, preserving and preparing, this book will help you enjoy all those fresh vegetables, whether they are grown in your own garden or purchased at the store or nearest Farmers' Market. The easy-to-read, 56-page book covers information on pickling safety and preserving all types of vegetables and fruits. It also contains information about when to pick vegetables and fruit, how to store fresh produce and how to prepare great tasting dishes.
- ***Horse Health*** ($15 plus GST) – horse owners will love this book. It presents important information along with photographs and illustrations that give a thorough understanding of parasites, pests, infectious diseases, lameness and other common medical problems that can affect a horse's health. It shows how to prevent problems before they begin, how to treat problems and when to call the veterinarian.
- ***Weeds of the Prairies*** ($20 plus GST) – full colour photos and illustrations detailing 112 weeds makes this the most complete work of its kind on the Canadian prairies. Weeds are color-coded by flower color for easy reference, and the full index makes it easy to find the species by common, scientific or family name. Charts on life cycle and habitat provide valuable information, and maps show how widespread particular weeds are. This 266-page book will make planning a weed control program easier and more effective. It can also help youngsters learn how to identify weeds.
- ***Beekeeping in Western Canada*** ($25 plus GST) – for experienced beekeepers and those just considering beekeeping, this book gives the information needed to manage honey bees successfully. Learn about the spring management of bees, winter feeding, honey extraction, honey bee health and marketing beeswax, pollen and honey crops. The provincial apiculturists in Canada's four western provinces packed this publication full of the best possible information on beekeeping in the west.
- ***Pulse Crops in Alberta*** ($25 plus GST) – this award-winning publication is a must-have for anyone interested in pulse crops. Learn the basics about pulse production or get more specifics in full color pages on field pea, dry bean, lentil and fababean. Also included is information on some lesser known pulses in Alberta, such as chickpea, fenugreek, grasspea, lupin and soybean.
- ***Growing Native Plants of Western Canada: Common Grasses and Wildflowers*** ($30 plus GST) – with over 100 pages of text and photographs, this book takes an in-depth look at 48 species of native plants that have shown promise for ecological repair. It will help anyone interested in collecting, growing and commercially producing native plants.
- ***How Herbicides Work: Biology to Application*** ($35 plus GST) – is an expanded look at the science of herbicides. The book is targeted at professionals who work with herbicides and at students. It would also be valuable to producers interested in the technical aspects of herbicides. With 134 pages of text, color tables, diagrams and photographs, the book provides an expansive discussion on the biology of herbicides as well as chapters on photosynthetic inhibitors, herbicide resistance, dose transfer, adjuvants and spray drift. There is also a section that focuses on how herbicides can best be applied.
- For those people on your list who like getting their information in front of a computer, ***Weed Identification Program CD-ROM*** ($10 plus GST) – is a helpful resource in identifying weeds and improving weed control. It was designed for farmers who want to improve weed control, agronomists who provide field service and backyard gardeners who will also find the CD useful. It contains information on five grasses and 56 broadleaf weeds. It also features a gallery of photos showing weeds at different growth stages; a description section that gives details about each weed; and, a glossary of terms.

These, along with many other book titles make wonderful gifts and are available at the publications office of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6. Book orders can also be placed by calling 1-800-292-5697 (toll-free in Alberta) or (780) 427-0391 in Edmonton. Please add $2 (plus GST) per order for shipping and handling.

Contact: Publications Office
(780) 427-0391
1-800-292-5697

Festivals and events – the ultimate 'call to action'

Many times we drive past a tourism spot and think, "We really must go there sometime." Destination owners and managers need to take those casual intentions and turn them into actual visits. One successful example of how this can be done is the *Harvest of the Past - Heritage Food Festival* event at the Ukrainian Cultural Village, east of Edmonton. The festival has become an annual event that has prompted many people to visit the site.

"Festivals and events are a call to action," says Sharon Stollery with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag Entrepreneurship division, Stony Plain. "They motivate people to visit a farm, ranch, operation, or farmers' market. They attract locals who have, for one reason or another, just never made it out before and they also draw people from outside the community, vastly increasing exposure and awareness."

Tom and Tamra Davison of Davison Orchards in B.C. are seasoned event hosts and have held a multitude of events on their farm over the years. Tamra Davison says, "At every event, I meet someone who has never been to the farm." Recently the Davisons started advertising their events to a large community 1.5 hours away and were astounded by the number of people who come.

Capture media attention – media exposure is a great reason to host events. Sometimes the media needs something just a little bit different or special to capture their attention. Often they will promote the event ahead of time and cover the event when it happens. This kind of publicity can't be bought. Be sure to notify the media of your upcoming events and always provide press releases and pictures.

Events drive sales – remember, the main reason to host festivals and events is to sell more products or services. Whether the goal is to increase sales on the day of the event or to create loyalty and attract repeat customers, the focus should always be the bottom line. An event can turn a slow month into a record breaker.

Expand through themes – product or seasonal themes are always a hit and really focus on product sales. Other ideas include: holidays, local heritage and cultural themes, or tying into area activities such as fairs, rodeos or sports events. Partnering with local groups (the local 4-H club, antique car club, or quilters guild) to provide a venue for their events is also an option. Partnering also provides the opportunity to give something back and build a positive reputation in the community.

Details make the difference – food, music, activities, contests and demonstrations are all key elements of a successful event. Also, adequate bathrooms, covered garbage containers, parking and staff are essential. A lot of planning goes into an event and it must be well-organized and executed in order to keep people coming back. Don't forget to have a plan B for bad weather and other unknowns.

"If you're not sure you're able to pull off a successful event on your own, consider partnering with other operators to create one big event," adds Stollery. "This past July, the first *Country Soul Stroll* was held in Sturgeon County. This self-guided driving tour allowed Edmontonians to visit up to 25 farms and rural venues and discover the richness of country and agricultural experiences in their own backyard. The success of the event was due to the cooperation of partners working toward a shared common goal."

To help Alberta's on-farm marketers, business owners and managers learn more about planning on-farm festivals and special events the Ag Entrepreneurship Division has organized two workshops. The workshops are being held on January 21, 2004 in Wetaskiwin and January 22, 2004 in Okotoks. For further information, call Keily Stetson at (780) 853-8240.

The latest issue of the Alberta Agri-Preneur newsletter also focuses on On-Farm Events. Alberta Agri-Preneur newsletter provides timely, incisive and creative ideas for agriculture entrepreneurs. The Alberta Agri-Preneur is available free of charge. To be placed on the mailing list, contact the Westlock Office of Alberta Agriculture at (780) 349-4466 (dial 310-0000 for toll free service) or e-mail: kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca.

Contact:	*Sharon Stollery* *(780) 968-3514*	*Kerry Engel* *(780) 349-4466*

Long-term planning helps Alberta farmers succeed

Farmers and agribusiness operators in Alberta will have a chance to build their management skills at a series of workshops this fall.

For the third year in a row, Farm Credit Canada (FCC) is sponsoring AgriSuccess. The one-day workshop, called ***Building Your Management Plan***, teaches producers how to set goals, build a strategic roadmap for their operation and get started on their own management plan. The program is a partnership with the Canadian Farm Business Management Council.

Workshops are scheduled for the following location and dates in Alberta.

• Brooks	November 24, 2003
• Medicine Hat	November 25, 2003
• Lethbridge	November 26, 2003
• Grande Prairie	January 22, 2004
• Three Hills	January 29, 2004
• Airdre	February 5, 2004
• Stony Plain	February 11, 2004

"FCC is committed to the future of agriculture, and to helping farmers and agribusiness operators grow, diversify and prosper," says John Ryan, President and Chief Executive Officer. "As the agricultural industry becomes more complex and competitive, management and planning skills are a critical determiner of success. This practical, hands-on workshop gives producers access to the tools they need to succeed."

A 2001 Ipsos Reid study on planning in agriculture found that just 16 per cent of Canadian producers have a written business plan. By comparison, 25 per cent of American producers and 29 per cent of Australian producers have formal business plans.

Scott Van't Land of Coalhurst, Alberta, one of last year's AgriSuccess participants, says his new knowledge has made a real difference. "The workshop gave me some tools to look critically at our farming business. I can now plan better for the future, positioning the farm to take advantage of opportunities that are presented," he says.

The size of each workshop is limited, so early registration is encouraged. The cost is $100 for an individual or $150 for an entire family plus their advisors such as lawyers or accountants. More information is available online at www.agrisuccess.ca or by calling 1-888-332-3301.

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Feed grain and forage conference

Capturing Feed Grain and Forage Opportunities: Growing It, Feeding It and Selling It is the theme of the first conference designed to meet the feed interests of both livestock and feed producers. The conference is being held at the Capri Centre in Red Deer on December 2 and 3, 2003 and will feature a bear pit session on creating value-chains between those who are growing, feeding and selling feed grain and forage. All stakeholders in the grain forage and livestock industries are welcome to attend this conference organized by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Western Forage and Beef Group, Alberta Environmental Sustainable Agriculture, Alberta Association of Agricultural Fieldmen and Alberta Research and Extension Council. For further information, in Alberta call 1-800-387-6030; for those out of province, please call (403) 742-7942.

Marketing With More Creativity Than Cash workshop

Develop a farm direct and ag-tourism marketing plan to grow your business with Alberta Agriculture's, Farm Direct Marketing Initiative. Jane Eckert of Eckert AgriMarketing and vice president of marketing for Eckert's Country Store and Farms, is the key presenter at the workshops and will cover: attracting media coverage; capturing customers' attention and repeat business; winning promotional ideas; implementing creative marketing ideas; and, maximizing promotions. Through her innovative ideas on diversifying operations as well as strategic planning, Eckert has helped develop the farm into one of the most popular entertainment and tourist destinations in St. Louis, attracting 500,000 guests annually. Workshop attendees will leave the workshop with an individualized guide that uses more creativity that cash to access free publicity and increase your marketing impact. Register early to join Eckert this December when Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development brings her ***Marketing With More Creativity Than Cash***, workshop to Alberta. The workshop is being held in three locations: Pincher Creek on December 1, 2003; Olds on December 2, 2003; and Leduc on December 3, 2003. To register, contact Alberta Agriculture at (780) 679-1362 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000). Register early to receive one of the first copies of Eckert's newest book *Fresh Grown Promotion* at no additional cost; sponsored by AVAC Ltd.

Pork seminar

The Banff ***Pork Seminar*** is being held on January 20 to 23, 2004. The seminar features speakers of international caliber who are recognized authorities in their field. The seminar is designed for participants who are interested in improving their knowledge and decision-making abilities in pork production. Commercial pork producers, researchers, agribusiness service and supply representatives, extension and education specialists and anyone interested in the latest information in pork production and technology are invited to attend. For further information contact seminar coordinators at the University of Alberta by calling (780) 492-3651; fax: (780) 492-5771 or e-mail: info@banffpork.ca. Information is also available on the seminar internet site at www.banffpork.ca.

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Agri-News

December 1, 2003

Natural gas rebate program offers flexibility for agriculture

The Natural Gas Rebate Program protects Albertans from high natural gas prices when they will need this assistance the most. Rebates are triggered when consumer prices for two out of the three regulated utility companies (ATCO Gas North, ATCO Gas South, and AltaGas Utilities) exceed the $5.50/gigajoule threshold. For most Albertans, this will be from November through March when their consumption is highest.

But for some agricultural users, the time when relief from high gas prices is needed most is during the spring and summer months. Therefore, the Natural Gas Rebate Program allows forage dehydrators, grain dryers, irrigation farmers and commercial greenhouses more flexibility in choosing which five months they wish to be eligible for an "off-cycle" natural gas rebate.

"We wanted to ensure that these agricultural users were offered the same benefits as other natural gas users," says Terry Holmes, rural utilities director, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "The program date has been extended to run from April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2006. This means that for the first year of the program these users can already claim rebates for the months of April, June, July and September of 2003.

"Agricultural users who qualify will need to fill out an application form and indicate which five months they want to receive their rebate. However, to get a rebate for this year, they must have their five-month selection in by January 31, 2004."

Rebates for these agriculture producers are calculated according to:

- the same monthly $5.50/GJ trigger price,
- the same sliding scale to determine the $ per gigajoule rebate, and
- five months out of 12 months, the same as other consumers.

"Most consumers will see a rebate on their monthly gas bill when a rebate is triggered," says Holmes. Rebates may be triggered for the winter months through to March of 2004.

Producers using propane, heating oil and kerosene, will receive an equivalent rebate based on the volumes purchased during the month in which a rebate has been declared. The four off-cycle agricultural groups are eligible for equivalent rebates if they use these fuels rather than natural gas.

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Holmes has a few suggestions for producers using other fuels:

- wait until the start of each winter month before filling a tank to see if a rebate is declared
- only partially fill a tank and fill the remainder during a month where rebates could apply
- all fuel users should be sure to keep any receipts that will be needed to receive a rebate cheque

For more information on the Natural Gas Rebate Program, contact Service Alberta at 310-4455. For information about off-cycle rebates for agriculture producers, contact the Natural Gas Rebate Program office at (780) 422-0300 (Edmonton and area) or toll-free at 1-888-671-1111.

Application forms for the rebates are available at MLA offices, AFSC offices, Alberta registry offices, direct sellers, and propane and heating oil dealers. They can also be found on the Alberta government website at www.gov.ab.ca.

Contact: *Terry Holmes*
(780) 427-0134

Possibility of interest relief on corporate taxes as a result of the BSE crisis

While the effects of BSE continue to take their toll on the cattle industry in the province, Alberta Revenue has recently implemented a policy where interest relief on overdue taxes can be requested if a corporate taxpayer is unable make a payment on the amount due because of market conditions related to BSE.

"Alberta Revenue will consider requests for relief from interest on corporate income taxes if the corporation is unable to pay its tax due to market conditions resulting from BSE," says Cathy Housdorff, director of communications for Alberta Revenue, Edmonton. "This provision is available to all corporate businesses associated with the cattle industry, such as livestock haulers, feedlot operators and abattoirs, provided the inability to pay is clearly the result of BSE."

A Special Notice has been issued by Alberta Revenue and is available from their office or on the Alberta Revenue web site at: http://www.revenue.gov.ab.ca/publications/tax_rebates/corporate/corp15.html

The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) has "fairness provisions" that permit it to waive interest and penalties where circumstances beyond an individual or corporate taxpayer's control prevent them from paying their taxes on time. CCRA officials have confirmed that financial hardship can be considered under the fairness provisions. Where taxpayers have been adversely affected by BSE (for example, due to the ban on cattle exports) CCRA will consider relief from penalties and interest on overdue taxes on a case-by-case basis. Complete information concerning fairness provisions is available from CCRA offices or on their website at: http://www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/agency/fairness/fair-prov-e.html

Contact: *Tax and Revenue Administration*
Information Line
(780) 427-3044

Toll free from anywhere in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000

Alberta mature market animal program gives producers choice

An Alberta-made mature animal program, designed to help producers deal with mature cows, bulls and other ruminants while the industry moves towards new market realities, will give producers more options and better reflect differences in value between animals, says the province's agriculture minister.

"This program is designed to be as market neutral as possible and to encourage producers to seek the highest value for their animals," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Alberta's program recognizes the individual value of market animals – a three-year-old bull may be worth more than a 12-year-old cow. Most importantly it puts business decisions in the hands of producers, who choose to keep their animals or offer them for sale."

Funding for the ***Alberta Mature Animal Market Transition*** program is part of the previously announced $100 million, which was earmarked for both a mature animal program and a final steer and heifer program.

Alberta's program offers producers the option of a per-head payment or a deficiency payment if they market their animals. Because of the unique nature of their industries, elk, deer, alpaca and llama producers will be offered a feed program specific to their needs.

Arno Doerksen, chairman of Alberta Beef Producers, said that Alberta's program also means access to immediate cash flow for the province's 38,000 cow/calf producers. "Many of our cow/calf producers have been suffering from a depressed market since the single case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) discovered in May 2003. This program will give them the immediate cash flow they need while they make adjustments for a new marketplace reality."

Alberta's program will cover all mature ruminants affected by the border closure, including cows, bulls, bison, sheep, goats, elk, deer, llama and alpaca.

Producers must register herds for the provincial program. More program information is available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca. Application forms are available on

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the web site, through the MLA offices or directly from Rural Services Division at (780) 422-9167.

Contact: *John Knapp – Rural Services Director*
Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 415-9755

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

Hunting and fishing levies at work

Albertans who buy a license, stamp or tag for fishing or hunting in Alberta this year, help the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) make vital conservation projects a reality. That's because a portion of proceeds from every license, stamp or tag goes to the ACA, to help the ACA complete vital conservation work.

Alberta has some of the world's best hunting and angling grounds and many of Alberta's farmers, ranchers and landowners participate in provincial conservation efforts. Hunting and fishing licenses help ensure that the province's fish, wildlife and habitat resources will always be part of life in Alberta.

"In fiscal 2002-2003, ACA received $6,913,588 from ACA's share of the levy on hunting and fishing licenses," says ACA's managing director, Steven Hull. "Those funds make up 71 per cent of ACA's operating budget, with the rest coming from partner funding and other donations."

Leveraging the $6.9 million in license levies, ACA funds hundreds of initiatives throughout the province. Projects occur in three business areas: fisheries, habitat and wildlife. In 2002-03, funding was allocated as follows.

- 44 per cent or $4.5 million to wildlife and fish projects
- 25 per cent or $2.6 million to habitat projects
- 10 per cent or $1 million to programs like Report a Poacher, Crop Damage Control and Enhanced Fish Stocking.

"ACA's work is critical to the long-term sustainability of fish and wildlife in Alberta, and hunters and anglers provide a substantial part of our funding through license levies," says Hull. "We believe that Alberta hunters and anglers should be recognized as key supporters and funders of conservation activity in our province."

The ACA is a non-profit, non-government association working collaboratively since 1997 to conserve and enhance Alberta's wildlife, fish and habitat. For comprehensive coverage of ACA activities, visit the ACA web site at www.ab-conservation.com.

Contact: *Lisanne Lewis*
Manager of Communications & Marketing
Alberta Conservation Association
(780) 427-8151
E-mail: llewis@ab-conservation.com

Wills and Estate Planning seminars

Most business owners take the time and steps necessary to minimize their income taxes each year with their accountant Making a Will and having an estate plan are, however, a different subject, and most farmers and farm managers haven't got their estate in order. To help farmers sort through this, a number of seminars organized and hosted by Alberta Ag Societies are being held in Alberta in 2004.

"Farmers may not realize how huge their tax liability can be at death," says Richard Baker, founder of the Farm Estate Advisory Group. "Many do not plan to pass their business to their kin so they don't need to address recapture, deferred tax liability, inventory or capital gains at death. But if they want to pass their farm onto the next generation, they have to realize their taxes at death plus the additional costs incurred if their will is outdated. That's the negative; here's the positive. The federal government offers a 50 per cent rebate on written estate plans that deal with the will, taxes and succession issues."

The Farm Estate Advisory Group brings a lawyer, an accountant and an estate advisor to these wills and estate planning seminars. These experts detail the above concerns and answer additional questions that come up in discussion. Attendees receive hundreds of dollars of advice for the price of admission. But more importantly, they see how a written estate plan saves them time and money.

The cost of admission at each of these seminars is set by the host Ag Society. For further information, please call the contact number given for each of the locations.

Wills and Estate Planning seminars for 2004:

January 12	Torrington Community Hall	Dorothy (403) 556-2497
January 14	Niton Junction Hall	Allyson (780) 795-2384
January 20 and 22	Red Deer	Cara (403) 350-2163
February 5	Josephburg Community Hall	Rick (780) 998-8590
February 23	Stony Plain Multicultural Centre	Patti (780) 963-8778

Contact: *Rick Baker*
(780) 487-5202
E-mail: richard.baker@shaw.ca

Agri-News Briefs

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$6000 in prizes to Alberta schools

Alberta Innovation and Science is having a Name The Innovator Contest to celebrate Alberta's 100th anniversary as a Canadian province. Teachers are encouraged to have their class research and write a sentence or two (30 words maximum) telling about a significant date in the life of a scientific or technological innovator (past or present) from their community or region. There are many areas in which scientific and technological innovators could work: medicine, engineering, forestry, agriculture, energy, I.T. and computers, biology, chemistry, physics . . . the list goes on! For example:

- July 1, 1997 – Joseph Martin is appointed Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Harvard University. He was born in Bassano, Alberta and studied medicine at the University of Alberta
- November 9, 1929 – Richard E. Taylor is born in Medicine Hat, Alberta. He wins the Nobel Prize in 1990 for verifying the Quark Theory.

The contest deadline is May 30, 2004. Classrooms may submit multiple entries as long as each entry describes a different innovator from their region. Entry forms are available on-line at www.scitechweek.gov.ab.ca. Once there, follow the links >Contest and then > Name the Innovator Contest. More information is available by calling Anne Marie Resta, communications division of Alberta Innovation and Science at (780) 427-0285. Entries should be sent to:

Name The Innovator Contest
c/o Communications Division
Alberta Innovation and Science
9th floor, 10365 - 97 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 3W7

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Alberta Agriculture/Infrastructure
7000 113 St. 101 JG O'Donoghue
EDMONTON, AB T6H 5T6

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Agri-News

December 8, 2003

The scoop on powdery mildew resistant field pea varieties

Producer discussions about powdery mildew on field pea in 2003 has continued well into late fall. A number of farmers have made the comment that powdery mildew (PM) resistant varieties purchased last spring did not show resistance in the field.

"Powdery mildew is a fungal disease that affects not only field pea but also other legumes such as alfalfa, vetch, lentil and lupine," says Ken Lopetinsky, pulse research agronomist, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Barrhead. "The disease overwinters on infected plant debris. The symptoms of the disease are small white spots on the upper surface of the leaves usually appearing first on the older leaves or lower portion of the plant. These spots grow together to form a white to gray powdery dust that, in a heavily infected crop, eventually turns the entire crop a light blue or gray color."

The risk of disease occurrence increases with later seeding, as well as, high nitrogen fields. Additionally, hot days followed by consecutive cool night time temperatures (less than 10 °C) result in rapid progress of this disease; within four to five days. For this reason, regular and frequent scouting of fields is absolutely critical.

"The amount of loss that powdery mildew can cause is dependent on when the disease symptoms appear," adds Mark Olson, pulse extension specialist with Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), Edmonton. "Early infections of powdery mildew result in stunted plant growth, reduced plant weight, reduced yield or even death of the plant. Later infections will reduce the effectiveness of harvest aids such as Reglone® and RoundupTransorb® and loss in field pea quality, especially green types."

There are number of ways to control powdery mildew. Seeding early and selecting fields where nitrogen levels have been drawn down go a long ways to avoiding this disease.

A sulphur based product called Kumulus® DF is available for use on field pea. It is sprayed at first appearance of the disease and may be repeated at 7 to 10 day intervals. Its cost is approximately $3.00/acre plus application cost.

Headline® (pyraclostrobin) is a new product that controls powdery mildew, as well as, ascochyta. It is sprayed at the beginning of flowering or at onset of the disease symptoms. It may be repeated 10 to 14 days later if the powdery mildew persists. Its cost is approximately $16.50/acre plus application cost.

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"Growers should be reminded to use only those products registered on field pea for control of powdery mildew," adds Olson. "The use of unregistered products might lead to trade sanctions."

There are a number of powdery mildew resistant varieties on the market. Farmers should be aware that these varieties might not have as high quality characteristics, such as bleaching resistance or stand ability, compared to non-resistant varieties. Powdery mildew resistant yellow varieties currently or soon to be available in Alberta are; CDC Golden, CDC Handel, CDC Mozart, Cutlass, DS Admiral, DS Stalwarth, Eclipse, SW Salute, Topeka and Tudor. Stratus, Bluebird and Camry are the only green powdery mildew resistant varieties (Note: there are a number of registered powdery mildew resistant varieties no longer available or grown in Alberta).

"There are number of theories floating around regarding what happened to the powdery mildew resistant varieties in 2003," adds Lopetinsky. "According to plant breeders, powdery mildew resistance is inherited as a recessive trait (genes er-1 and er-2), and this inheritance is analogous to a pregnancy. That is, either you are or you aren't. There is no such thing as being a little bit resistant to powdery mildew. If the powdery mildew resistant field pea you grew did not exhibit resistance and the seed purchased was not certified true to variety, it is possible that you did not receive the variety you thought you were buying. Another explanation might be that the non-certified seed purchased was blended off or inadvertently mixed with a susceptible variety. A final thought is that the disease that farmers thought they were seeing in the field was not powdery mildew but rather downy mildew, ascochyta blight or sclerotinia."

Contact: *Alberta Ag-Info Centre*
1-866-882-7677
Mark Olson
(780) 422-3825
Ken Lopetinsky
(780) 674-8214

What is the best potato variety?

There are over 140 varieties of potato registered in Canada. A very comprehensive listing can be found on the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) web site at http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/plaveg/variet/potpome.shtml. To be registered, a variety must have attributes that distinguish it from other registered varieties. Attributes include skin color, flesh color, eye depth, time to maturity, yield potential, dry matter, how well they store, intended use, and disease and pest resistance.

"Varieties are developed through breeding and selection programs with specific objectives in mind," says Michele Konschuh, potato specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "While many of the varieties may be useful for more than one application, potato varieties are generally developed for processing into potato chips, processing into French fries or for table stock."

Chipping potatoes tend to be round-shaped, light skinned potatoes with shallow eyes and very high dry matter (also referred to as specific gravity or per cent solids). The high dry matter ensures that potato chips are light and crispy when fried, not dark and soggy.

Potatoes grown for French fry production tend to be long or oblong in shape, have light or russetted skin (brown, netted), shallow eyes and high dry matter. As with chipping potatoes, the high dry matter ensures crisp, fluffy-textured fries that do not shrink during processing or take up an excess of oil.

Varieties selected for table potatoes have a much wider range of attributes. Different varieties are best suited to specific culinary applications. For instance, potatoes that are best suited for baking, tend to be mealy (dry) and may slough or fall apart when boiled. These potatoes have high dry matter much like processing potatoes. Potatoes best suited for boiling and roasting, may seem waxy (wet) when boiled and usually make soggy, dark French fries. These potatoes have less dry matter. To complicate matters further, cooking quality is affected by the maturity of the potatoes, environmental conditions while growing, and storage conditions after harvest. "New" (young or small) potatoes tend to be more waxy or wet textured when cooked and are better choices for boiling than for baking. Old stored potatoes tend to have higher dry matter and may be better for baking or mashing.

"When choosing a potato for peeling, eye depth may be a concern," adds Konschuh. "Large Red Pontiac and Irish Cobbler potatoes have very deep eyes, although they yield and store well. If you grow potatoes and hope to store them after harvest, factors such as yield, time to maturity and how well they store will be important considerations. If you grow potatoes in an area where specific diseases, such as scab, can be a problem, you may want to select varieties known to have some resistance."

To answer the question, 'what is the best potato variety', would depend what the potatoes are being chosen for. Some experimentation may be required to find the best variety for your favourite recipes.

In Alberta and most parts of Canada, potatoes are generally marketed by skin color and shape rather than by variety name. When purchasing potatoes in large-chain grocery stores, you may not be able to determine the variety of potato in the bag. Red skinned potatoes purchased one week, may differ in taste or appearance from those purchased another week because the variety is different. Russet skinned potatoes are often sold as bakers, but may be called white potatoes in reference to flesh color rather than skin color. Yellow potatoes are generally yellow skinned and yellow fleshed, but the variety may still vary.

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Fresh pack companies do tend to market varieties with similar attributes so that variations while cooking will be less noticeable. "If you purchase potatoes from market gardeners, you may be able to ask about the attributes of each variety and select accordingly," says Konschuh. "When growing your own potatoes, the biggest challenges may be locating seed and limiting the number of new varieties you try each year."

For some general idea of what type to grow or purchase consider the following:

Baking and fries – for baking, you will want the potatoes to be fluffy and dry textured to soak up more butter or sour cream. Russet potatoes or "bakers" are well suited to this application. Russet potatoes tend to have high dry matter and mealy or dry texture. Russet potatoes include varieties such as Russet Burbank (also known as Netted Gem), Russet Norkotah, Gem Russet, Goldrush, and newly released Pacific Russet. Most of these varieties are also appropriate for home fries.

Boiling and roasting – red skinned varieties or new potatoes are usually well suited to boiling. These potatoes are also good choices for roasting or use in potato salad after boiling because they tend to be firm and creamy textured once boiled and they hold their shape well. Some varieties, such as Norland, naturally contain higher amounts of a compound called chlorogenic acid that reacts with the iron in potatoes to produce a dark pigment after cooking. This "after-cooking darkening" may be controlled by adding lemon juice or vinegar during cooking. Good examples of red potatoes are Norland, Red Pontiac, Sangre, Viking and Chieftan. Although you can use some red potatoes for baking, they usually make soggy home fries.

Boiling and Baking – white skinned potatoes are often considered "all-purpose" varieties. These varieties are round or oval in shape, have light skin and white flesh. They have intermediate dry matter, somewhat between red and russet potatoes, and may be used for boiling, mashing and baking. Examples of white potatoes include Carlton, Eramosa, Superior, Irish Cobbler, Kennebec, and CalWhite.

Yellow-fleshed varieties are gaining in popularity and have a richer flavour than traditional white-fleshed varieties. Yukon Gold and Bintje are quite well known, but other varieties such as Island Sunshine and Morning Gold taste as good as they sound. White and yellow fleshed potatoes exhibit less after-cooking darkening than some red varieties.

Novelty varieties are also available through market gardeners and specialty packers such as The Little Potato Company in Edmonton. Novelty varieties include red skinned, yellow-fleshed varieties, varieties with purple skin and some with purple flesh, and varieties with red or variegated flesh color. Although these varieties each have their own attributes, the unusual colors take some getting used to. Typically they taste like more common potatoes and they are purchased to add color and interest to a meal.

"Alberta's potato industry has grown dramatically over the past 10 years," says Konschuh. "The majority of potatoes grown in Alberta are grown for processing chips and fries, and to provide seed potatoes for domestic use and for export. Although good quality table potatoes can be grown in Alberta, many of the potatoes marketed in chain grocery stores have been imported from other provinces or from the U.S."

For more information about Alberta's potato industry, visit the Potato Growers of Alberta web site (http://www.albertapotatoes.ca). More information about potato varieties grown in Alberta is available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/app21/rtw/index.jsp. Then follow the links *>Crops >Horticulture >Potatoes*.

Contact: *Michele Konschuh*
November 2003

Southern Alberta water group receives award

Cooperation and foresight, key factors in surviving the worst drought of the century in Alberta, were traits exemplified by the 2001 Southern Alberta Water Sharing Group. The group has received international recognition for its innovative distribution of critically low water supplies in 2001.

On November 19, the Irrigation Association – an American non-profit organization – presented the water-sharing group with its 2003 National Water & Energy Conservation Award. The three main groups that received the award were the St. Mary River Irrigation District (SMRID) Expanded Main Canal Advisory Committee, the Southern Water Users Association and the Blood Tribe Agricultural Project. The award winners represent more than 200 different water licensees, including seven irrigation districts in Southern Alberta, individual private licence holders, municipal users, agricultural non-irrigation users, recreational users and industry licence holders.

Below-normal precipitation from the winter of 1999 through to 2001 caused significantly below normal water supply. This, combined with virtually no summer precipitation and very hot temperatures, resulted in historically low reservoir storage coming into the 2001 irrigation season. In typical years, water stored in the reservoirs in the fall is about 500,000 acre feet. In the fall of 2000, it was just over 200,000 acre feet.

"Recognizing a severe problem, the SMRID Expanded Main Canal Advisory Committee began considering water management strategies to deal with the shortage," explains Len Ring, manager, Irrigation Secretariat, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge. "They soon invited other stakeholders to join them, and the water-sharing group was formed.

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"The group realized that because of the extreme conditions, it would be virtually impossible to ration water exclusively on a licensed priority basis. A 'water sharing' arrangement that saw the water equally shared regardless of licensed priority was proposed. Water assignments available under the *Alberta Water Act* allowed for such sharing agreements."

The agreement saw water from senior licensees voluntarily assigned to all participants on the condition that all licensees (including municipalities, industry and rural pipelines) were restricted to 60 per cent of their previous year's water consumption.

This relatively simple concept required significant planning and implementation. Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Alberta Environment supported the water-sharing group. Irrigation Branch staff from Alberta Agriculture worked with the irrigation districts to calculate for each farmer, on a case-by-case basis, how many days of irrigation he or she was entitled to. Alberta Environment staff provided water supply forecasts, administered all the licenses, and coordinated the agreement ensuring that all water users honoured the spirit of the agreement. Towns, golf courses, industry, rural water co-ops, and others did a tremendous job of identifying and implementing conservation measures to meet the sharing agreement criteria.

According to Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, what could have been an insurmountable crisis became an unprecedented example of cooperation, communication and success. "I'm pleased my department staff were able to contribute to this initiative," says McClellan. "This really exemplifies the spirit of sustainable agriculture that drives our industry."

Dr. Lorne Taylor, Minister of Environment, expressed his congratulations as well. "Albertans understand that water is what drives our economy, our environment and our overall well-being," he says. "I am proud that during a time of need, 200 licensees, with the help of government staff, came together in a spirit of co-operation to develop an internationally recognized water management system. They have set a high standard for others to follow."

Contact: *Len Ring*
(403) 381-5176

Proposed compensation fund protects farm implement purchasers

Legislation that will make changes to the way farm implement dealers and distributors indemnify their customers, bringing the current legislation in line with today's financial realities, was introduced in the Alberta Legislature on December 1, 2003.

Richard Marz, MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, introduced Bill 55, the *Farm Implement Amendment Act*. The bill will eliminate the current bond requirement needed for farm implement dealers and distributors to qualify for a licence to operate in Alberta for 2004.

Rather than meeting bond requirements, dealers and distributors will now pay annual levies into a newly created compensation fund. As a result, farmers in Alberta who incur losses related to farm implement warranties or sales contract obligations will be able to make claims to the fund.

"One of the impacts of recent world events is that the insurance industry has tightened the qualification rules for bonds. In many cases, dealers and distributors can no longer qualify," says Marz. "This, combined with the prohibitive cost of bonds, is resulting in fewer and fewer licensed dealers and distributors."

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, says the new compensation fund will ensure farmers are better protected. "The amendment will mean that farmers, as well as dealers and distributors in the farm implement business, are treated fairly in their business."

Contact: *Richard Marz*
MLA – Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills
(780) 415-0994

Terry Willock
Communications Director
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-7683

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

New generation co-ops: 10 things you need to know

A New Generation Co-op (NGC) is a business arrangement that encourages agricultural producers and processors to expand the scope of their businesses. Sometimes described as hybrids between traditional co-ops and limited companies, NGC's may help bridge the gap between commodity-oriented primary producers and consumer-focused markets.

New Generation Co-ops: 10 Things You Need to Know is a new web page launched by the Alberta Agriculture Innovative Business Arrangements Team. The page has an easy-to-read question and answer format that provides basic NGC information such as:

- What is an NGC?
- What types of NGCs have been created in Alberta?
- Why are western Canadian farmers considering this type of business arrangement?
- What are the steps required to organize as an NGC?
- What legal and tax issues should producers be aware of, and what business decisions need to be made?

Team leader of Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development's Innovative Business Arrangements Team, Merle Good says, "The site is a comprehensive overview to get producers and processors thinking about new ways of working together. An NGC is just one way, but it's a new way and people are looking for more information about the pros and cons."

Also included on the site are a number of hot links to examples of NGCs, research papers, organizations and other web sites. In addition, a reference index page is linked to the site that lists all of the links and information resources in a reference list format.

New Generation Cooperatives: 10 Things You Need to Know is on Alberta Agriculture's web site at http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca, under *Business and Economics > Business Management > Business Arrangements*. For more information, contact Good at the Alberta Agriculture office in Olds at (403) 556-4237 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first).

Contact:	*Linda Hawk*	*Ted Darling*
	(403) 528-5250	*(403) 948-8524*

Agri-News Briefs

Banff Pork Seminar 2004

Riding the Highs & Lows is the theme of the 2004 Banff Pork Seminar being held in Banff on January 20 to 23, 2004. Nationally and internationally renowned speakers will address key issues for the pork industry of the future, such as: Challenges for the Pork Industry; Warming up for C.O.O.L. (Country of Origin Labelling); and Your Prosperity – Won & Lost. Participants can choose sessions to match their needs. Sessions on the agenda include;

- Living with Pig Traceability
- Value-at-Risk
- Managing Welfare Audit Systems
- Managing Large Group Grow-Finish Pigs
- Protecting Feed Quality & Safety
- Building & Keeping your Dream Team
- Protecting your Workers & Yourself
- Where are the Dollars in Carbon Credits?
- Hitting the Core on the Grid
- Manipulating Meat Quality with Diet
- Boosting Boar Power in the Breeding Barn
- Dealing with the Equity Drain

For more information or to register, contact Banff Pork Seminar at (780) 492-3651, fax (780) 492-5771; or e-mail info@banffpork.ca. The seminar web site address is www.banffpork.ca.

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Locomotion and performance in the athletic horse

Locomotion can be considered the most important function of a horse's body. Without locomotion, the horse would not be able to feed, breed or take part in sporting events. The study of locomotion, or gait analysis, provides useful information for describing the individual horse's pattern of movement, for characterizing sporting performances and for detecting the presence of gait asymmetries that might be indicative of lameness.

At the ***2004 Horse Breeders and Owners Conference*** being held in Red Deer on January 9 to 11, 2004, Dr. Hilary M. Clayton, BVMS, PhD, MRCVS from the College of Veterinary Medicine, Michigan State University, will explain how the McPhail laboratory uses video analysis to study the horse's movements and force plate analysis to measure how the hoof pushes against the ground.

"The McPhail laboratory has developed custom software for combining the video and force data to calculate the torques around the joints and the generation and absorption of power across each joint," says Les Burwash, horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie. "Conference attendees will be very interested in Dr. Clayton's presentation as she describes the techniques used in gait analysis and the phases of the stride and their functional significance."

The research information Clayton will present will describe movement patterns of the horse in terms of the linear and angular displacements, velocities and accelerations. It will include information on kinematics (the study of movement patterns), kinetics (the study of the forces involved in locomotion) and will explain gait analysis from initial ground contact through the impact phase, loading phase, breakover and swing phase.

Clayton is one of 12 presenters on the conference agenda for 2004. This year, the speakers will make presentations on research findings, marketing information and training ideas and techniques.

"The conference offers different programs designed to fit different equine interests," says Burwash. "Conference participants can attend any of the sessions and will receive the printed materials from all sessions."

The program starts with a wine and cheese reception on Friday, January 9 at 7:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday's sessions begin at 8:40 a.m.

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Conference registration is $85 per person. For more information about the 2004 conference, contact Burwash at (403) 948-8538, or Laurel Wood at (403) 948-8521, Airdrie. Government numbers are toll free by dialing 310-0000 first.

Contact: *Les Burwash*
(403) 948-8538

Alberta Young Farmer Forum 2004 seminar

Young farmers from across the province are invited to attend the ***Alberta Young Farmer Forum*** being held in Red Deer at the Black Knight Inn on January 7, 2004. The Wild Rose Agricultural Producers (WRAP), and the Outstanding Young Farmers of Alberta (OYFA), have combined efforts to sponsor the Forum which will run simultaneously with the WRAP convention and seminar.

"This ***Alberta Young Farmers Forum*** addresses issues that are relevant to many young farmers today. The event provides an opportunity for young farmers to meet one another, discuss common concerns and build a support network," says Lisa Anderson, co-chair of the OYFA. "This network is a source of support that can help young farmers handle the stress that the agriculture industry is currently facing and to face challenges yet to be identified."

The will cover topics such as dealing with the media, farm business management strategies, marketing trends, "the aging farmer", risk management, The Farm Business Management Council, as well as an overview of "what is happening" from the federal government perspective.

Key speakers include Merle Good (Alberta Agriculture), Cindy McCreath (Canadian Cattlemen's Association), Dianne Finstad ("This Business of Farming" TV show), Jerry Bouma (Agricultural Consultant), Ray Bollman (Statistics Canada), Bob Friesen (Canadian Federation of Agriculture), Bill MacFarquhar (Farm Business Management Council), Jim Dinning (TransAlta), and, tentatively, Ralph Goodale (Federal government).

"Young farmers are often caught up in the day-to-day work on the farm and need to take the time to establish support networks," adds Anderson. "This Forum will give young farmers an overview of the industry, the tools necessary to establish a critical network, and information about working with the media."

All young Alberta farmers are invited to attend this exciting seminar and be a part of the future of agriculture. Visit the OYFA web site at www.wrap.ab.ca.

Contact: *Rod Scarlett (WRAP)*
1-877-451-5912 (toll free)

Sheep require mandatory tags

All sheep leaving the farm of origin after January 1, 2004 will require a mandatory national unique identification tag.

The case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) found in one Alberta cow has emphasized the need for an effective animal tracing system. "The Canadian sheep industry has taken a proactive approach in creating a unique identification program that is affordable, flexible and effective," says Maureen Duffy, general manager of the Alberta Sheep and Wool Commission (ASWC), Airdrie. "The system will enable the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to trace sheep of concern back to the farm of origin. In the event of a sheep being diagnosed with a reportable disease, the trace out of other potentially susceptible animals can easily be accomplished."

The Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) is anticipated to be federal law as of January 1, 2004. The CSIP tagging system will be monitored by CFIA. Anyone who does not comply may face legal consequences. It will be illegal for processing plants, truckers and auction markets to accept untagged sheep or lambs.

For 31 years, ASWC has been collecting a service charge (check-off) on the sale of sheep and wool in the province. This money is used to fund the organization's promotional and research projects. The current service charge is $1 on every sheep/lamb sold in the province. The method of collecting this service charge will be changing in the near future. When a producer places an order to buy CSIP tags through the Canadian Cooperative Wool Growers (CCWG), the service charge will be included in the price of the tag ($0.31 CSIP + $1 ASWC service charge = $1.31).

The Alberta government, through the Agricultural Products Marketing Council, supports the inclusion of the ASWC service charge with the CSIP tags sold before the ASWC regulations amendments are approved. This will accommodate producers who purchase the CSIP tags before the national and provincial regulations are in force. The price for the ASWC service charge will remain $1.

"The ASWC has signed a contract with the CCWG that preauthorizes the sale of CSIP tags," adds Duffy. "Producers purchasing tags before the federal legislation is in place will be doing so on a volunteer basis. However, after the legislation is in force on the anticipated date of January 1, 2004 the CSIP tag will be mandatory by federal law."

Please note:

- $1 will be collected by the CCWG on behalf of the ASWC for each tag sold in the province.
- As of December 2, 2003 tags are available for sale in Alberta through CCWG (1-800-567-3693 to order)

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- To minimize loss of the $1.31 CSIP tags, it is strongly recommended that producers do not tag their breeding stock or lambs until they leave the farm of origin
- During the regulation transitional phase, should any lambs be shipped with the designated CSIP tag and also have service charge deducted at the point of sale then producers who verify that they have paid the service charge twice will be eligible for a refund on one of the charges

Although the anticipated date is January 1, 2004 for the federal regulations to come into force, it is recommended that producers contact the ASWC office to find out the status of these regulations. The ASWC office number is (403) 948-8533. This number is toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first.

Contact: *Maureen Duffy*
(403) 948-8533

Alien species invading Alberta's environment

The word 'weeds' brings to mind images of dandelion and perhaps Canadian thistle – persistent plants that most Albertans are very familiar with. And, because they are so common, the word 'weeds' doesn't stir very strong feelings of the threat that many weed species can pose to our environment. Weeds are invasive plants, and there are some invasive alien species that can and do have an increasing, serious impact on Canada's environment, economy, and society.

"Weeds are non-discriminatory with respect to boundaries and during the last couple of decades it has become painfully evident that their impact is anything but just an agricultural issue," says Kim Nielsen, manager of Agricultural Services, Clearwater County. "In Alberta, the *Weed Control Act* came into effect shortly after becoming a province in 1905, largely due to pressures from the agricultural communities to protect agricultural lands from the spread of weeds. The concerns were real back then prior to the development of effective herbicides, the use of synthetic fertilizers and the advancements of plant genetics. These pressures are still real today, because despite the technological advancements in agriculture, the margin of profit is small and the slightest reduction of yield from weeds can affect the bottom line. Generally good agricultural farming practices are an adequate remedy for weeds and successful farmers manage their weeds well."

Weeds, however, do not restrict themselves to farmland. Because of an unlimited appetite for habitat, we have seen weeds encroach onto non-agricultural lands as well, although the problem is often not recognized. "The scientific community has called the spread of weeds an explosion in slow motion, a serious form of biological pollution, habitat destruction second only to wild fires. It has been a struggle to get society awakened to this environmental disaster largely because little is known about the impact of weeds on the ecosystem," adds Nielsen.

Thanks to the efforts of many U.S. based organizations, there is now a change in attitude among land managers of non-agricultural lands. The need to understand weeds in relationship to land stewardship is gaining in importance. The increased awareness of the environmental impact of weeds has brought together multi land-use stakeholders to design effective preventative and reactive control programs.

"The agricultural terminology of weeds has changed to better describe the impact of the plants and "invasive species", "alien plants", "harmful non-native vegetation" have now become the chosen words," says Nielsen.

One particular group that has actively promoted the protection of plant bio-diversity from invasive plants is the Eastern Slopes Invasive Plants Council made up of various land agencies along the Rockies on the Alberta side from Pincher Creek to Edson. Over the last eight years, through stakeholder meetings and seminars, the Group has been successful in promoting weeds as a forest health issue similar to insects and diseases. As a result Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development have now transferred weed control programs from the Range Management Division to the Forest Management Division, Forest Health. This change is significant as it recognizes provincially the impact of weeds on non-agricultural (non-range) areas.

To further increase the awareness of invasive plant species in a Canadian context, the Eastern Slopes Invasive Plants Council hosted the ***Invasive Plants: Understanding The Threat Conference***, in Calgary in October 2003. The objective for this conference was to foster the education of those that enjoy Alberta's natural parks, forests and protected areas about invasive plants. The conference created a link to the proposed National Plan on Invasive Alien Species and highlighted the need to develop inter-provincial programs as well.

For further information on invasive plant species in Alberta, visit the Eastern Slopes Invasive Plants Council's web site at http://www.aaaf.ab.ca/invaders/.

Contact: *Kelly Chambers*
Eastern Slopes Invasive Plants Council
(403) 236-1771
E-mail: invasiveplants@shaw.ca

Initiative helps reduce impacts of manure in the Little Red Deer River watershed

Over the years, various stakeholders have implemented projects on different stretches of the Little Red Deer River and its tributaries to improve the state of the river and water quality. Facing increasing public pressure and legislation to improve water quality, these stakeholders realized they needed a stronger community-based approach to expand their reach and implement changes in the watershed.

Discussions by the various stakeholders resulted in the formation of the Little Red Deer River Watershed Initiative in 2001. "By partnering together, the stakeholders are able to look at the whole watershed as opposed to just their little area," explains Lesley Gavelin, Chair of the Initiative and assistant watershed coordinator, Mountain View County. "They also successfully applied for funding under PFRA's Rural Water Development Program to support projects and implement changes."

The stakeholders include the Municipal Districts of Big Horn and Rocky View, the Counties of Mountain View and Red Deer, Friends of the Little Red Deer River Society, Mountain View Waterways Restoration Group, Alberta Conservation Association (ACA), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – PFRA, Alberta Environment and Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development. These groups represent a broad range of interests and expertise, adding strength to the Initiative. They are the drivers behind the initiatives in the Little Red Deer River watershed, from its headwater areas to where the watershed drains into the Red Deer River.

The Little Red Deer River watershed is one of the major sources of drinking water for over 90,000 people, including the City of Red Deer, and the towns of Innisfail, Bowden, Olds, Didsbury, Carstairs and Crossfield. It is also an important tributary in the watershed for sport fish populations and habitat.

The livestock industry also relies heavily on this watershed and its water. A Statistics Canada study based on 1996 livestock census estimates manure and fecal coliform levels in the watershed as the ninth highest in Canada of similar sized watersheds. It was estimated that more than 2000kg of livestock manure is produced per hectare, which is based on livestock density in the Little Red Deer River watershed.

Recognizing that high manure concentrations can potentially have negative impacts on human and livestock health, fish and wildlife and agricultural sustainability, the Initiative is making projects that keep manure out of the Little Red Deer River and its tributaries the priority. "We will fund demonstration projects at 50 per cent of the total costs, and other projects up to one-third of the total costs," explains Gavelin. "Total project costs include in-kind contributions and the time to complete the project. In some cases, the Initiative ends up paying the cash costs for the project and the producer contributes the time and equipment to complete the project."

Projects funded to date range from riparian pasture fencing and off-site watering systems, to wintering site relocation and feedlot catch basin development. The Initiative still has money to fund projects this year and through to March 2005. Producers who have a project idea are encouraged to contact their local watershed coordinator or municipality and submit an application. Take advantage of the funding to help make changes to your operation that will benefit your farm or ranch, and the entire watershed.

Contact: *Leslie Gavelin*
(403) 335-3311
lesleyg@telusplanet.net

Agri-News Briefs

Farm Women's Conference

Finding ways to balance rural life in today's hectic lifestyle is what the Farm Women's Conference is all about. This ***Laughter from the Heart*** conference is being held in Calgary on February 5, 2004, from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Guest speakers highlighting the agenda include Tracy Lyn Moland, author of *Mom Management*, and Shirley Best, who has mastered the knack of turning the everyday pressures of life into the ultimate comedy. The agenda also features an *Affordable Fashions* show and a craft and trade show. To book a trade or craft table ($25) contact Jane Mason at (403) 932-3137 or Janice Hawkwood at (403) 932-3137, Cochrane. Registration is $35 and includes conference, lunch, fashion show, gift bags, door prizes, craft and trade show. Registration deadline is January 23, 2004. For further information or to register for the conference, contact Jayne Shaw (403) 995-5539, Pat Pringle (403) 335-4087 or Jane Mason (403) 932-3137.

Marketing program

Getting Your Product to Market is a comprehensive, client-focused marketing program that will provide emerging value added producers and processors with the knowledge and understanding to successfully develop and market their agricultural products. The one-day workshops are:

Market and Product Analysis

Edmonton	January 20, 2004
Airdrie	January 22, 2004

Product Design and Promotion

Edmonton	February 24, 2004
Airdrie	February 26, 2004

Placing Product & Providing Service

Edmonton	March 23, 2004
Airdrie	March 25, 2004

Pricing Consideration & Approaches

Edmonton	April 20, 2004
Airdrie	April 22, 2004

New! Interactive Sales Skills

Edmonton	May 18, 2004
Airdrie	May 20, 2004

Workshop registration is $25 per workshop plus GST. For further information or to register, contact Sarah Oliveira, marketing advisor with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, (780) 422-8622.

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New Farm Implement Compensation fund

The *Farm Implement Amendment Act* was passed through the Alberta Legislature on December 4, 2003. This Act authorizes the creation of a Farm Implement Compensation Fund that will replace the current bonding requirement for farm implement dealers and distributors in our province.

"This fund will be completely controlled outside of the government, under the direction of the Farm Implement Board," says Dean Lien, Farmers' Advocate for Alberta and *Farm Implement Act* Administrator, Edmonton.

This Board is now a statutory corporation, and has the authority to:

- determine the value of levies and assessments that go into the fund
- determine who qualifies for compensation
- determine the value of the award

The Farm Implement Board will have the following membership:

- one dealer representative appointed by the Canada West Equipment Dealers Association
- one manufacturer representative appointed by the Canadian Farm and Industrial Equipment Institute
- one distributor representative appointed by PIMA-Agricultural Manufacturers of Canada
- three farmer members appointed by the Wild Rose Agricultural Producers in conjunction with two additional agricultural producer groups
- one farmer member appointed by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

"As of January 1, 2004, businesses that plan to distribute or retail farm implements in Alberta will be required to contribute to this compensation fund as a condition of receiving a license to operate," says Lien.

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The 2004 levy for participation in the fund is $750 for each business location. Dealers who did not have a bond in place in 2003, and were operating as a dealer or distributor, will be assessed $750 for each business location in addition to the 2004 levy.

"Licensing continues to be under the authority of the Minister of Agriculture," adds Lien.

Levies and assessments must be made payable to the Farm Implement Board and fees made payable to the Alberta Minister of Finance. Each application must be accompanied by a $50 license fee for each business location.

Farm implement dealers are urged to remit the indicated amounts immediately, together with a completed application. A dealer license will be issued as soon thereafter as possible.

For further information, contact inspectors Dennis Budney or Bernie Yakimyshyn at (780) 427-2188.

Contact: Dean Lien
(780) 427-2188
Bernie Yakimyshyn
(780) 427-2188

Dennis Budney
(780) 427-2188

Hard-packed snow makes grazing difficult

Feeding horses and other livestock this year has taken a difficult twist. Livestock producers and animal owners will want to pay special attention this year to the body condition of their animals.

"Albertans know that providing feed to livestock during winters in Alberta is a necessity," says Les Burwash, horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "This winter, with the intermittent colder and warmer weather and the accompanying winds, the snow cover has hardened and iced-over in many areas, especially in the central and southern parts of the province."

Livestock producers and owners are finding that horses, cattle and other livestock cannot break through the hard-packed snow and ice, which makes it impossible for them to graze.

"It's important to keep a close watch on livestock during any winter, but with the grazing problems many areas are experiencing, it's important to be even more diligent this year," adds Burwash. "Producers and owners are advised to check the body condition of their horses and other livestock frequently to ensure that they are getting enough feed. Providing additional feed may be required in areas where animals are having difficulty grazing."

Contact: Les Burwash
(403) 948-8538

A new Raising Cows, Raising Profits *seminar*

Raising Cows, Raising Profits is a new Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development seminar that encourages Alberta's cow/calf producers to look beyond 2003. The focus of this full day session is to analyze the long-term (three- to five-year) risks for the cattle industry and highlight strategies for managing these risks.

"To get past this last year, producers will have to know how to deal with uncertainty for the long-term," says Jeff Millang, financial business analyst-beef with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds. "Tools and information provided at the seminar will help producers protect their investment, position their operation at the leading-edge of the industry and become a more profitable cow/calf enterprise. Strategic thinking can help producers look at the big picture with the goal of surviving and thriving past the BSE incident."

Agenda topics and featured speakers at the seminar include:

- **Kevin Grier** from the George Morris Centre will discuss U.S. country of origin labeling (COOL) and its impact on the Canadian producer (COOL is a voluntary program until September 30, 2004 when it becomes mandatory for beef, veal, lamb, pork, fish, fresh and frozen fruits and peanuts). Grier will present the latest regulations, the pro and con U.S. perspectives, the willingness of consumers to pay for trace back/labeling and the Canadian interpretation and implications of this program on Canadian cattle producers. It is estimated that this program could cost the Canadian cattle industry $300 million.
- **Nithi Govindasamy** from Alberta Agriculture who will discuss international trade. He will talk about who were/are our customers, who are our competitors, and what the future might look like regarding the resumption of international beef trade.
- **Ted Darling** of Alberta Agriculture will discuss the topic of managing uncertainty. Risk and uncertainty have certainly been the name of the game for the Canadian beef industry. Responding to uncertainty is difficult, and often very stressful. This session will provide an understanding and some processes to make choices in an uncertain environment. The focus of this session is not about predicting the future, but being able to understand uncertainty and make decisions based on uncertain events.
- **Anne Dunford**, Canfax, will discuss the history and current view of the cattle cycle. The factors that drive beef demand and the impact of BSE on the cattle cycle will also be highlighted.

"It is imperative that cattle producers know their costs of production," says Millang. "Producers need to know what components are required to produce their product. Keeping

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good performance records, weighing the animals and treating the cows as a profit centre can lower costs of production and make more money. By intensifying production the unit cost of production can be lowered."

To register for ***Raising Cows, Raising Profits*** seminar, contact the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-800-387-6030. The registration fee is $53.50 (GST included). The registration deadline is January 9, 2004. Early registration is advised as space is limited.

January 20, 2004 – Medicine Hat

January 21, 2004 – High River

January 22, 2004 – Red Deer

January 23, 2004 – Vermilion

January 26, 2004 – Fairview

January 27, 2004 – Valleyview

For Program information contact Millang (403) 556-4326 or Deidre Moen, risk management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, (403) 556-4245, Olds.

Contact:	*Jeff Millang* *(403) 556-4326*	*Deidre Moen* *(403) 556-4245*

Consumer Help Line is one-stop source for advice on preparing safe holiday food

Preparing the holiday meal can raise several questions:

- How long does it take to thaw a turkey?
- Do I have to rinse the turkey?
- Is it safe to eat the gift ham my husband left on his desk overnight?

The Food Safety Info Line is a one-stop Canadian source for answers to these and other questions about safely preparing and cooking a turkey and other holiday foods.

A Canadian toll free number, 1-800-892-8333, will put you in touch with home economists who are experts in food safety. "The Food Safety Info Line staff are prepared to talk about turkey, but can also give other food safety advice such as the safe use of eggs in eggnog and the best way to handle produce, including green onions," says coordinator Jane Carlyle. "The staff also provide tips on the best way to transport food to a family gathering or potluck and how to keep food served at an open house or on a buffet safe for guests."

The Food Safety Info Line is answered Monday through Friday, including Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, December 24 and 31, 2003, from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. (MT). Questions left after hours are answered the next business day. Further information is also available on the Food Safety Info Line web site at www.foodsafetyline.org. Factsheets on safely handling turkey plus other handy information is posted to the site.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) supports the work of the Food Safety Info Line (FSIL). AAFC is committed to working with industry partners to increase public awareness of food safety issues and practices in Canada.

Contact: *Jane Carlyle*
1-800-892-8333
janecarlyle@3web.net

New tool to help value chain development

To help Alberta's agri-food businesses compete in an ever-changing global market, a new CD called ***Agri-food value chains, a practical guide to building customer-focused alliances*** was developed by Alberta's Value Chain Initiative program

This interactive tool showcases a number of local and global experts who have formed their own value chains. The CD was produced as a three-way collaboration by the Agriculture and Food Council of Alberta, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

"Interest in value chains has been growing around the world and Canada's agriculture and food industry is a relatively new user of this business approach, compared to Europe, Australia and other parts of the globe," says Art Froehlich, chairman of the Agriculture and Food Council.

The CD offers agri-food businesses access to practical ideas and insights into the challenges and benefits of developing value chains. Experts share ideas on how companies can work together in a vertical alliance to achieve rewarding positions in the marketplace. The value chains have allowed participants to capitalize on market trends, overcome barriers and increase profits.

In addition, the CD outlines a step-by-step process, complete with worksheets. Market research publications, links to business and export planning templates and many other usable tools for agri-food businesses are also included as part of the CD

"Organizations and individuals will find this CD a great help in evaluating the use of value chains for their business operations," says Froehlich

The Value Chain Initiative strives to provide the agriculture food industry with expertise in creating strong alliances that benefit all enterprises throughout the value chain. The CD builds on the success of an earlier *Value Chain Handbook* created under the same program

For details call the Agriculture and Food Council office at (780) 955-3714 or email info@agfoodcouncil.com.

Contact:	*Laura Lee Billings* *(403) 948-2069*	*Margurite Thiessen* *(780) 968-3515*

Riding lessons that fit

Horseback riding, recreational and competitive, is gaining in popularity. Albertans of all ages are taking an interest in equine sports. As with most sports, there are skills that need to be mastered to ensure a safe ride and a pleasant experience.

At the ***2004 Horse Breeders and Owners Conference*** being held in Red Deer on January 9 to 11, 2004, Muffy Knox, certified Equine Canada Western Level 2 coach and a former school teacher, will talk about riding lessons, what the students expectations may be, what the instructor expects and how taking these lessons can be an enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

"Knox has been involved in developing the Equine Canada's western coaching system and she remains a member of the testing team for Western coaches," says Les Burwash, horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie. "Her 15 years' teaching at Olds College and her current full-time training, showing, judging and instructing give her the knowledge and experience to speak very knowledgeably on the subject Riding Lesson Expectations."

The information Knox will present will help individuals when they are shopping for riding lessons. She will present selection criteria and point out reasonable expectations from both the student and the instructor's point of view. Developing good riding skills takes time and attention to detail. Getting a good start by choosing a good instructor and coach is a very important first step.

Knox is one of 12 presenters on the conference agenda for 2004. This year, the speakers will make presentations on research findings, marketing information and training ideas and techniques.

"The conference offers different programs designed to fit different equine interests," says Burwash. "Conference participants can attend any of the sessions and will receive the printed materials from all sessions."

The program starts with a wine and cheese reception on Friday, January 9 at 7:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday's sessions begin at 8:40 a.m.

Conference registration is $85 per person. For more information about the 2004 conference, contact Burwash at (403) 948-8538, or Laurel Wood at (403) 948-8521, Airdrie. Government numbers are toll free by dialing 310-0000 first.

Contact: Les Burwash
(403) 948-8538

Agriculture Hall of Fame seeks the best of the best

The Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame is now accepting nominations to honour individuals who represent the best of Alberta's agriculture and food industry and rural life.

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development encourages Albertans to put forward the names of those that have made a significant difference to the agriculture industry. "Agriculture is such a vital part of Alberta's economy and history," said McClellan. "It's the innovators and risk-takers that keep this industry moving forward and those are the type of people that are honoured by the Agriculture Hall of Fame."

Every two years, the Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame recognizes the outstanding contributions of Albertans who have dedicated their lives to the agriculture industry and to their community. The Hall of Fame showcases those who exemplify leadership and accomplishment in their careers at the community, provincial, national or international level.

Since 1951, the Agriculture Hall of Fame has added 111 men and women to its ranks. The 2004 recipients will be announced in October prior to Agriculture and Food Week. Inductees will have their portraits and a description of their contributions displayed in the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Hall of Fame located in the J.G. O'Donoghue Building in Edmonton.

Nomination forms for the Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame are available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca. Forms may also be picked up at MLA offices or by contacting Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Agriculture Information Division, J.G. O'Donoghue Building, 7000-113 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T6H 5T6, or phone: (780) 427-2727, toll free by first dialing 310-0000. The deadline for nominations is March 15, 2004.

Contact: Bard Haddrell
Executive Director
Agriculture Information Division
Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-5312

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

Reaching new farm direct customers

"There are many opportunities to reach new customers and get 'in touch' with people who may not realize that a farm direct operation is a short drive away," says Kerry Engel with Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development Farm Direct Marketing Initiative, Westlock. "Listening to some of Alberta's successful farm direct marketers and just paying a little extra attention can lead to some unique promotional opportunities."

- There are over 50 channels and yet the channel that gets turned on daily is usually the **Weather Channel**. Are your customers watching weather, too? Perhaps it's time to investigate a "crawling" ad on the Weather Channel
- Events at **Canadian Forces Base**s can connect you with hundreds of families in these closed communities that have their own highly developed social network. Hundreds of young families with children looking for rural outings, fresh food and agricultural experiences
- **Canadian Blood Services** recently held a telephone promotional campaign reminding everyone that it was Blood Clinic time. An Alberta farm direct marketing operation participated in a cross promotion at their community Blood Drive by handing out coupons to everyone who donated blood. Do you know when and where your local Blood Drive is being held?
- Stores often have **areas set aside for children**. These are places for children to go and build something and have fun while the parents enjoy the luxury of time to shop at their leisure. Does your operation have a children's corner?
- Have you got a new animal on your farm? Why not host an **animal naming contest**? The press loves stories about animals and kids

"Collaboration, sponsors and partnerships can occur on many levels," adds Engle. "Something as simple as exchanging services, such as hauling gravel or printing a flyer for promotion and exposure at events; promoting partner businesses on the side of barns, in corn mazes or on an extra brochure panel. It can be daunting, but you won't know until you ask whether or not another business or charity would welcome a collaborative effort."

"You may want to tap into the incredible talent of students from a local arts college. A lot of schools have practicums, hands-on work experience programs. Check out these art department students for your business. Other programs have work experience programs, too, such as business and market planning, food service and media. Collaboration with educational institutions can benefit your business and an aspiring young Albertan."

If you would like to learn about more creative ways to market farm direct and ag tourism operations, register for Alberta Agriculture's newest educational program, ***Planning On-Farm Festivals and Special Events – Year-Round Opportunities for Farm Direct and Ag Tourism Operators***. Events are the one marketing tool that can set you apart from your competition. Events will help you increase sales of your farm and ranch products and services.

This workshop is being held in Wetaskiwin on January 21, 2004. Mark and Angela Saunders from Saunders Farm will explain how to put on fantastic events without doing all the work; how to use events to "keep 'em coming back"; how to successfully execute an event; and, how events can attract free publicity that you could never get before.

Registration is $55 per person or $55 for the first registrant and $45 for each additional business/family member. This includes the program, an Event Planning book and lunch. For more information or to register, contact Keily Stetson at (780) 853-8240 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first). Registration deadline is January 9, 2004. Register early to avoid disappointment!

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4466
Cell phone: (780) 349-9017

Agri-News Briefs

Agronomy Update 2004

As producers look ahead to the new cropping year, the first event that will likely be marked on their calendars is ***Agronomy Update 2004***, being held in Red Deer on January 13 and 14, 2004. The agenda features 34 talks on a wide-range of topics and speakers from industry, academia, research institutes, federal and provincial governments and Ducks Unlimited. Presentations include: Insect and Disease Issues for 2004; Soil Quality Assessment Tools and Nutrient Management Tools for Agronomic Decisions; Crop Diagnostics; Integrated Weed Management; Alternative Weed Control Options; and, many others. Registration for the two-day conference is $133.75 per person in advance and $155.15 per person at the door (prices include GST, meals and proceedings). For further information or to register, call the conference registration line at the Alberta Ag-Info Centre toll free in Alberta at 1-800-387-6030.

On-farm events

Planning On-Farm Festivals & Special Events is a one-day workshop presented by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag-Entrepreneurship Division, Farm Direct Marketing Initiative. The workshop features Mark and Angela Saunders from Saunders Farm in Munster Ontario who will share experiences and information about their business so you can save time and money developing your on-farm events. The workshop will be held on January 21, 2004 in Wetaskiwin and on January 22, 2004 in Okotoks. For further information or to register, contact Kerry Engel, with Alberta Agriculture, (780) 349-4466.

Explore Direct E-news launched December 1, 2003

Creative nuggets and current news for Alberta's farm direct marketers is what ***Explore Direct E-news*** is all about. This new electronic newsletter features information about profitable farm direct marketing ideas; new strategies to attract customers to increase sales; upcoming workshops and tours; and, new vendor and market opportunities. To subscribe to this electronic newsletter, visit the Explore Direct web site at http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/ksub.nsf/.

Helping Farmers stay on the farm

It seems to be getting harder for farmers to maintain the quality of life that keeps them on the farm and deal with financial hardships. The Drayton Valley and District Agriculture Society, Agri-Food Canada and the Brazeau County Agricultural Service Board are bringing some options to the table at the ***Facing the Future in Agriculture*** seminar in Drayton Valley's Frank Maddock High School on January 31, 2004. The seminar will give farmers an opportunity to hear about diversification options available to today's farmers and talk to people who have already diversified their farm and their farm income. Seminar speakers will present information on a number of diversification options. Margie Moore, from the Lazy M Ranch in Caroline, will discuss how her family started a Country Vacation to supplement a cow/calf operation and now it supports the Ranch. Dr. Ed Mahoney, a professor and extension specialist in the Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies at Michigan State University, will discuss the many types of agriculture tourism operations and how farms and ranchers can start viable operations that are compatible with the farm and ranch family. Registration is $10 per person and registration forms are available at the Brazeau County Office or on-line at the Brazeau County web site at www.brazeau.ab.ca. For further information, contact Kelly Starling, (403) 542-7777, Neil Norton (780) 339-2360 or Wes Tweedle (780) 542-3324.